LUMPEN

A JOURNAL FOR POOR AND WORKING CLASS WRITERS

CLASS AND > LAND JUSTICE, THE COMMONS, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, BORDERS, NATIONS, THE WEATHER, FOOD,GROWING, NATURE, LANDSCAPE, MAPPING, TERRITORIES, QUEERNESS, ACCESS(IBILITY), RAVE CULTURE, FESTIVALS, RAMBLING, ANIMAL KIN, COLONIALISM, TRAVEL, CONSERVATION, FORESTRY, PICKING, URBANISM, THE COUNTRYSIDE, LAND TIES, NATIVISM, MENTAL HEALTH, SEASONS, RIVERS, LAKES, GRASS, MEADOWS, HOUSING, LAND PROJECTS, COOPERATIVISM, HORIZONS, WOODLAND, URBANISATION, GLOBAL SOUTH, EXTRACTIVISM, FARMING, SABATEURS,OCCUPATIONS, GLADES, BROWN FIELD, CANALS, ESTATES, ROADS, HOME.

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We printed this issue using an online print service because printing co-ops aren't affordable to us. All workers still got paid. But sadly, there was at least one boss involved in the process of publishing this journal.

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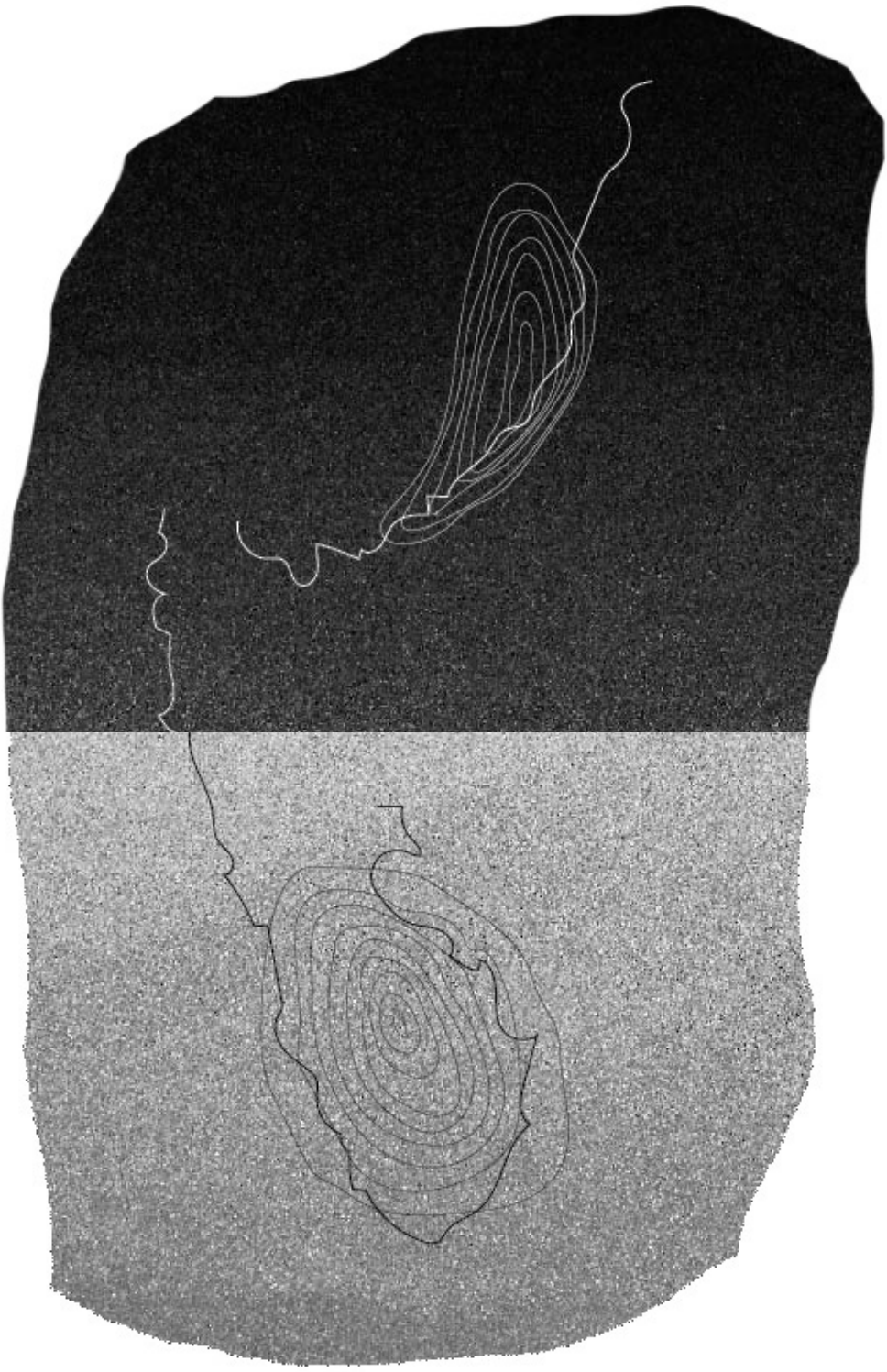
LUM PEN.

Editorial



On Maps

Robert Jopson

On maps where mountains are feathers,
rather than sheets piling into the distance,
forms falling in every direction, tethering
the changes of light and shade.

On maps where we are linked
by rivulets and dark stone,
marked by the shards of implements,
where fingers fly like little birds
over, laid down, flattened space.

Where the mud and the spines and the heights
don't force us to walk in wide curves
to find a point, flat, between trees,
where we can cross the sharpened fold.

To find a place where we can stumble,
where we can climb and slip and tumble,
where the patterns found in the paper weave,
are the only organised lines we leave.
.

Plunder

Bell Selkie Lovelock

Note: This story's intention is towards healing the rupture between people and place. Many indignous languages speak a word-spell that makes more connection possible by not having words for "a" and "the" before nouns for other-than-humans, like "sea" and "stream". I choose to speak in this way too.

Cold clear morning here in the shadow of Ceannabeinne, near Durness on the north coast of the Isles of the British. Sea is deep blue reflective down the hill, and plashy waters of the burn saturate the soundscape, along with solitary robin who is alarming from the one gorse who flowers golden amongst a host of green bushes. The shriek I made from my dip in the peat-stained flow of the burn is probably responsible for his concern and I apologise profusely, sending him threads of thought, images of worms and seeds in an attempt to peace-make.

I have meandered to this place along small windy roads of Assynt Coigach, taking direction from the bluest sky and the hope of night-time auroras. This land arouses a spectrum of responses in me. I am deeply stilled by the wildness of mountains, rivers and sea. Yet the wreckage of barren moors and bare-banked lochs longing for the company of trees rouses a fury that has me reeling when I see the signs stating ownership by such-and-such estate or see the tell-tale presence of "the big house". These mansions are unfailingly surrounded by old woods that were spared the ravages of the dis-ease that possessed their owners to clear the land beyond not only

of humans but of pine marten, capercaillie, lynx, wolves, and all the beings that were Caledonian Forest. Modern humans all have this dis-ease – some more than others, and though it has no vaccine, it can be healed. This journey I'm on from West Cymru is a 50th birthday gift to myself of a prolonged solitude of which I have been in deficit since becoming a mother. It also contains the medicine for the sickness of the dominant culture.

***

Nearly 22 years ago, I was sitting by the Wye, 5 months pregnant with my first child, rounded with a bovine contentment beside my lover, relishing this last time away together before becoming parents. We'd agreed, before the pregnancy, to share childcare equally–as radical social change activists both he and I had worthy missions beyond holding the hearth and raising children. On that still, early June day as the brown waters slid by, my world tipped sideways when he asked whether the share of childcare could be divided up 70/30 or even 80/20 – creating his business couldn't be done without some serious slog he explained, and he felt an urgent desire to do it as soon as possible.

I remember the cold metallic feeling of panic hollowing me when I realised that this was a plundering of my female nature– that my biological bond to my children would be exploited by the men I love– the fathers of my children– the men who love me. In a moment of optimistic straw-grasping I negotiated for more of my own life, agreeing to 80/20 for now, with a role reversal after 5 years. My world seemed to right itself again when he agreed to this concession, yet I felt a desecration.

Seven years later with a sacred contract and 4 hearts broken, I left him. He continued his worthy work of 80 hour weeks, which eventually included co-founding an international organisation responding to the climate catastrophe. I've often heard him saying

when in his role as chief strategist of the organisation, that he did this work because of his children–the children that he gave me £10 a week to raise and for which he contributed minimal time and took even less responsibility.

As he crafted his dreams into something tangible for which he attracted both acclaim and media-mauling, my life was sculpted by the need to earn a living, by the holding of the home. Add to that the everyday emotional labour and mental load of being a mother without a village in what's called patriarchy (though how we live feels more like a widespread absence of healthy and responsible fathering than the word patriarchy conjures.) Mothering's a life of depth, like that of unseen mycelium that keeps the tall and visible trees alive. It isn't lauded in the way we are in awe of visible power, of the tallest trees, or the biggest mammals, this being a culture where some species, some genders, some skin colours are considered more exceptional than others.

The yearning to respond to the world beyond my survival dance was softened for many years by the smooth veil of accommodation created by oxytocin, the hormone that allows women to put their needs aside for the benefit of small children and steadiness in the family unit. The sharp blade of menopause cut through my life and that was that. A welcome clarity came once the veil was gone, with the surges of heat fueling an intense desire to respond to the threads made of longing for belonging which lay before me, rippling like an underground stream who's song you hear only when you are really quiet, really listening,and brave too – the siren song it sings can upturn lives like paper boats. So I am here, not alone but out of the company of my species and away from the currents of my children's lives for a month. Here– this remote coastline that blue sky led me to. Here, with the carcasses of old crofts perched amongst the rocks above a road to which the occasional modern house clings. I'm listening.

***

I first noticed the ruins in the shadow— it's late October and the cottages have their shoulders hunched against the sou'westerly wind, slumped into the lea of mountain— they won't feel sun on their stones until March now. As I hop the fence to get closer, my feet find an old trackway, firmer than the surrounding squidge of red and green moss. I follow its steep rise and, turning to catch my breath, I see the old strip field walls that radiate from the small bay at Sangobeg. I imagine women, walking up from a heavy cold day kelping (burning seaweed to make soda ash for the estate to sell) or working those fields of potatoes, bere and kale. They are heading home to these tiny crofts.

I go inside the roofless walls and gravitate to the hearth. There is the iron bar from which hangs the chain and hook that held the cast iron pot warming the day's meagre food. I know their lives were harsh— that these crofts were the crumbs thrown down from the big table of the wealthy to the highlanders cleared from the more fertile inland glens when farming humans made less money than farming sheep.

I imagine the cold-reddened hands of the woman who blew the banked up fire back into flame, added peat and stirred the pot; I see her staring into the coals, casting her mind over the things yet to do, moving to the door to call her bairns and frowning at the cloud-laden sky over grey wave-broken sea, wondering whether the men will be back from fishing before dusk.

Fresh water has always seemed to me to send the sacred invitation for humans to settle. Without the nearness of sweet waters we cannot live well for long. I can hear a burn nearby and move to find the dry path that takes me to the slab of stone that spans it. My eye follows its course and sees a pool. It has bracken and gorse around it, but parting them, I find the small wall that was built to deepen the pool, and flatter stones around it's edge where once the woman knelt to wash clothes.I see worn linen under layers and wool shawls

drying on the gorse and crouch in the company of ghosts, feeling the ease of the modernity I am from, the many more choices I have and yet, there's also an old alongsideness with these women who's lives were shaped by a culture that favours the ones most willing to inflict violence, and still they did what they were able to nurture life.

In the torch light later that evening in my van, I read about how each parcel of land was allocated to the displaced folk of the glen, who were forced to move to the shadowy slopes of Ceannabeinne from their ancestral home. The lacky of the tacksman took the best plot for himself whilst the "widow of George Mackay" was allocated a croft who's land was "mostly a thick layer of moss overlaying rocks and shingle" and "beyond improvement"; I read how, between 30 and 40 years later after the profitable kelp industry collapsed, the tacksman waited until the croft men were cutting thatch 4 miles away to send his bailiff to deliver an eviction notice that gave the families 48 hours to pack up their lives and leave – again.

One woman ran up the steeps of Ceannabeinne to call the men home. Whether they heard her with the ears on their heads or those of their hearts is unknown, but the call for aid was heard. The men returned to find that the women had seized the bailiff and made him burn his notice so it could not be seen as served. A few days later he tried again and was sent packing in a skirl of bagpipes, so the story goes.

Those crofters continued to resist the ongoing injustices until the day of the Durness Riots of 1841, one of the first serious uprisings against the Highland Clearances. These people with so very little, fighting for lives they'd scraped from a place that thirty years before had been a stranger to them– learning to fish sea they'd never met, and build houses and grow food with land they'd never known.

`

Right here, right now, I feel the burn of a painful tension within the being of human. I'm strung out between shame and honour. On one

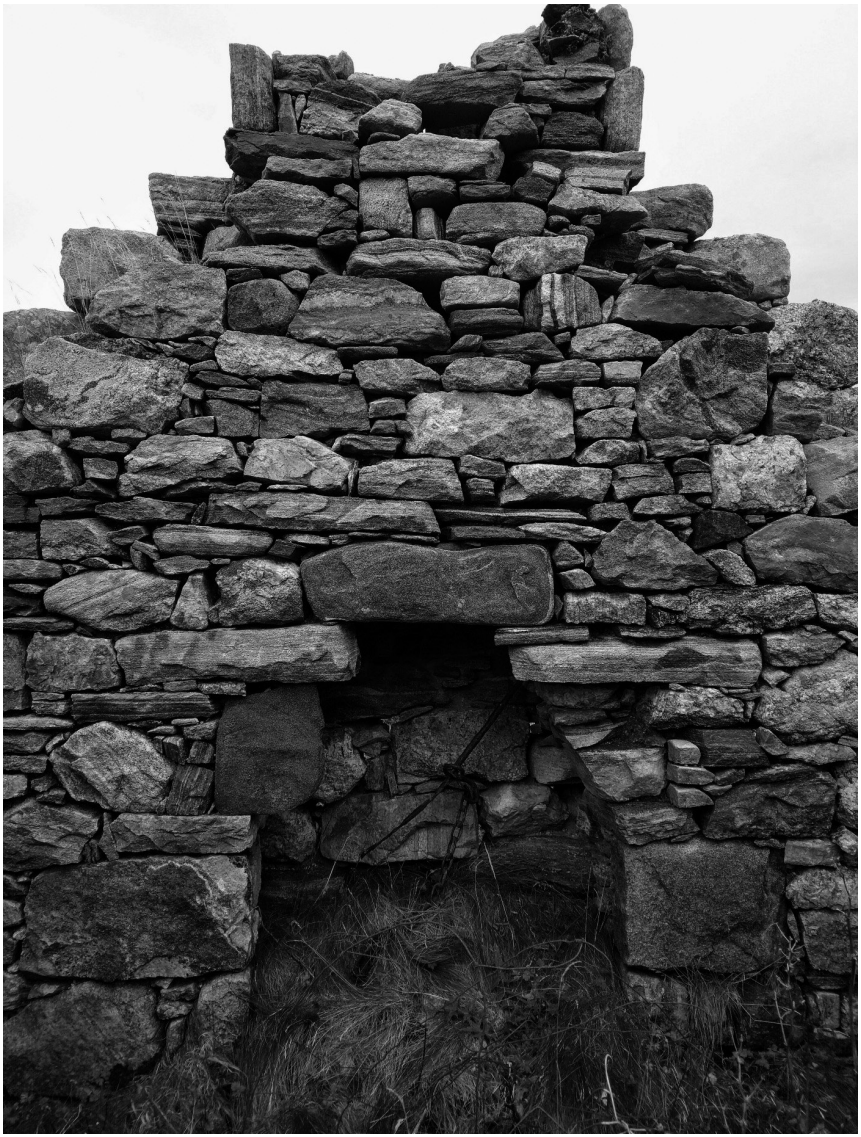
hand, there's the being of human which can order clearances that destroy places; cast communities of more-than-humans adrift time and again. On the other hand, there are people who, despite what is confronting them, keep leaning towards life, and holding hearth. Those people are like gorse rehabilitating robbed soils with nitrogen fixing abilities and protecting young trees from overgrazing with thorns. Then there's people like sheep and deer on these wrecked slopes – peaceful ones made predatory by an ages-old amnesia disease. And of course, I, like all modern humans, am both beings.

I start to walk up scree–take the path of the woman who called the men home, and follow the gorse-edged burn up to its source at the base of the rocky top of Ceannabeinne. Once my breathing quietens, it is silent amongst the black pools where the waters rise, save for wind hissing through cotton grass. I feel sure this wind carried the voice of the woman calling to protect her people on that day in 1841. I see now that I too am here to call home those who are in service of life. We too are on the edge of an eviction, as we stumble around on the sheer edge of mass extinction. I crouch at the summit and let the last of my bloods feed into the soil from which the spring bubbles up, feel myself dropping down somewhere very else, to some subterranean place within me in which the edge of "me" becomes a permeable membrane, not resisting the inward flow of who is around me – skylark, low cloud, wind, rock, distant watchful stag.

I follow the source waters down as they gather themselves to sing and tumble, past flying rowans growing out of rocks. The tree trunks bow outwards like crescent moons to evade nibbling teeth of sheep and red deer, stretching into safety over the burn. The waters pour down further to the deep, quiet channel as stream passes through the old fields of the crofts. The flow journeys further down again, through jagged spurs of pink quartzy cliff to where the waters braid across crystalline sand of beach. Here I listen until sunset at the place where fresh water adds its sweet note to the salty song of sea. I am

re-membering; weeping; belonging again.

NB Thanks to the farmer I met at the ruins who told me some of the harshness of the lives lived in the crofts. He told me to pronounce Ceanna Beinne as che-arna bay-na.



Images by Bell Selkie

October 2019

Iran's Khuzestan:
Riots Against The Suicidal State[1]

Jose and Iman

> It is only in an order of things in which there are no more classes and class antagonisms that social evolutions will cease to be political revolutions. Till then, on the eve of every general reshuffling of society, the last word of social science will always be: *Struggle or death; bloody war or nothing. It is thus that the question is inevitably posed.*[2]

> It was Sheikh Shoaib's voice that cut over the dark diamond of the night. "I knew that it would come to this finally." And now it had come to this and the acerbic fragrance of the palm tree grove was no longer mixed with the sultry smell, and the shadow of a tall steel tower sitting in the blue context of the sky would break over the clay wall of our house and spread into the wide yard [...] the night my father returned from the coffee house his lips were drooping and he said to Khaj Tawfiq, who asked him, "What was it?" that "They want to demolish the houses... they say they want land again for the administration office." And I thought that Maidan was hungry and it had opened its oil mouth to swallow the city bit by bit…[3]

1 On the evening of 16 July 2021, protestors amassed in the city streets of Ahwaz, Hamidiyeh, Mahshahr, Soosangerd, Shoosh, and Shadgan, all of which are located in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan. Largely comprised of individuals from Khuzestan's Arab-minority, subject to systematic discrimination and structural racism at rates higher than their marginalized counterparts, the most immediate cause of these protests was the province wide water crisis that has resulted in the devastation of once fertile lands. Lest we forget that the revolutionary potential of social movements are born in the most unlikely of places: it was in this region without reliable access to water, electricity, or wages that the mass character of these protests first appeared. As if overnight, it soon became impossible to frame these protests as isolated incidents, since it was Khuzestan as a whole that refused to acknowledge the authority of a government that is itself incapable of providing even the most basic public services. The speed at which protests became riots was matched only by the degree of brutality doled out by the regime in response, using live ammunition on protestors. And yet, the protests that began on 16 July 2021 have continued ever since. This text was completed on the eve of Khuzestan's most recent wave of protests, this time over the withdrawal of state subsidies for basic goods, resulting in a nearly five-fold increase in the price of wheat. In spite of the fear intended by last year's state-killings, Khuzestan reminds us that "to judge from the current disposition of people's minds, communism isn't exactly knocking on the door. But nothing is as deceptive as the situation, because nothing is so changeable."

2 Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), tr. the Institute of Marxism Leninism (1955), *Marxist Internet Archive*. www.Marxists.org. Accessed on 24 March 2022.

3 Ahmad Mahmoud, *Our Small City. Parts translated here from the Farsi text in:*
محمود، احمد.“شهر کوچک ما” در غریبه‌ها و پسرک بومی (مجموعه داستان)، تهران: انتشارات امیرکبیر، 1353.ص 100-89.

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INTRODUCTION

Not much time had passed since November 2019—since the bloody crackdown of nation-wide urban revolts and the Mahshahr massacre[4] at the hands of Hassan Rouhani's government—when, in July 2021, demonstrators protesting against the lack of water in Iran's Khuzestan province were shot and their mobilization temporarily suppressed; a protest movement still in its ascendency.[5] Whether in Khuzestan, Iraq, or Lebanon, the ritornello shouted in the streets is the same: "If the situation continues like this, we will die anyway!" Under every established order considered deadly, every protest is a protest for change,protests in defense of life. In a video published online, amid scenes from the protests in Khuzestan, we hear an Arab-Iranian man shout: "You closed the water on us, you flooded our lands to move us, but we are not going, this is the land of our ancestors."[6] In the published account from one anthropologist (Aqeel Daghaghleh) we read about a meeting with the family of Haj Majid and of his sons, Jassim and Hassan, in particular: "Hassan, as if he considered this a disgrace, said, 'Someone takes your land, closes the water on you and humiliates you, and then [you expect that] we will go and get his [Basij militia] active membership card and toil for him.'[7] The nameless Arab, the anthropologist, the family: all of them, too, belong to this mass display of resistance to a government that transforms the border between life and death into the mere play-thing of politics. Thus, whether it is during the protests of the Arab-Iranians or in the streets of Khuzestan, one encounters the slogan نه به آوارگی [*no to forced displacement*].

4 As Amnesty International reported: "In almost all protests that took place between 15 and 19 November, there is no evidence that people were in possession of firearms or that they posed an imminent threat to life that would have warranted the use of lethal force, according to research, including video analysis, conducted by Amnesty International. The organization is aware of two exceptions in one city on 18 November where gunfire was exchanged between protesters and security forces." 'Iran Details Released of 304 deaths during protests six months after security forces killing spree', *Amnesty International*, amnesty.org. Accessed on 24 March 2022.

5 As Human Rights Watch reported: "Amnesty International reported that at least 304 people were killed. Iranian authorities said that 230 people were killed, but have failed to conduct any transparent investigation into serious allegations of unlawful use of force by security officials and instead prosecuted protesters in unfair trials." 'Iran Deadly Repression of Khuzestan Protests,' *Human Rights Watch*, www.hrw.org. Accessed on 10 November 2021.

6 Video is available here: https://www.facebook.com/100000008741344/posts/4561191247224455/?d=n

دغالقه، عقیل. بن‌بست، تعلیق، تعلیق مضاعف. میدان، 28 تیر 1400. در دسترس در: https://meidaan.com/archive/7906

It is no exaggeration to say that, today, necropolitics[8] is both the global consensus shared among the governments and the content of their respective sovereign decrees. That is to say, governments, whether neo-colonial, endo-colonial or settler-colonial, decide which sections of the population are worth saving and which sections are not. Moreover, the globalization of necropolitics has already linked the centuries-old struggles of diverse indigenous peoples to the contemporary struggles of the urban poor. The struggle of the people who defend their land against the forces of exploitation and deprivation is defined by the necessity of choosing between two incommensurable paths whose relation abides by the disjunctive logic of exclusion, '*either... or*…': either I keep the ecosystem that keeps me alive, or my life will be impossible; either I protect my *form-of-life*[9], or I will die anyway. It is this asymmetrical logic devoid of the conservative promise of reconciled differences that characterizes these struggles as anti-necropolitical. The poor on the outskirts of the city say the same thing when their protests are met with rounds of live ammunition: '*either* I will die anyway as the situation continues, *or* I will change the situation for the better.'It is this asymmetrical, disjunctive, logic of exclusion that forms the basis for a particular form of internationalism today. Precisely because what we encounter amidst the struggles and contestation that have appeared throughout the Khuzestan province, is repeated everywhere indigenous militants mobilize in defense of a form-of-life that is not only older than capitalism itself, but is composed

8 For more see Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Duke University Press, 2019).

9 By invoking this term, we refer to the definition employed by Giorgio Agamben in his 2013 summer lectures, in response to the then-recent wave of insurrectionary occupations: "All living beings are *in* a form of life, but not all *are* (or are not always) a form-of-life. In the moment that the form-of-life constitutes itself, it deactivates and renders inoperative not only all the individual forms of life, but first of all the *dispositif* that separates bare life from life. It is only in living a life that a form-of-life can constitute itself as the inoperativity immanent in every life. The constitution of a form-of-life coincides, that is, completely with the destitution of the social and biological conditions into which it finds itself thrown. The form-of-life is, in this sense, the revocation of all factical vocations." (Giorgio Agamben, 'What is a destituent power?' trans. Stephanie Wakefield, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *32(1)*, 65–74, 65). For more see *Hostis*, 'Destituent Power: An Incomplete Timeline,' *destituencies*, destituencies.com; and Jose Rosales, 'The Reality of Destitution is the Destitution of Reality: Preliminary Materials for a Genealogy of Destituent Power', in *Unworking*, ed. Peer Illner, (August-Verlag: 2021). Accessed 4 May 2022.

of decidedly anti-capitalist social relations.[10]

If necropolitics is no longer the exception but the rule of the current regime of geopolitical governmentality, then it is only appropriate that we refer to nation-state's who employ techniques such as these as suicidal states.[11] The suicidal state—a term simultaneously coined by Paul Virilio and Michel Foucault—refers to nation-state's using increasingly overt forms of militarized violence to resolve crises that are social in nature such that the dynamic of class warfare over a given territory of the nation transforms itself into a total war against the milieu pure and simple, into a war against nature and society. Suicidal statecraft subordinates the classical priority of the seizure of territory to the destruction of territory and its social and natural life. Hence our agreement with Deleuze and Guattari's conclusion regarding the concept of the suicidal state:fascism is, perhaps, better defined "not by the notion of the totalitarian State but by the notion of the suicidal State: so-called total war seems less a State undertaking than an undertaking of a war machine that appropriates the State and channels into it a flow of absolute war whose only possible outcome is the suicide of the State itself."[12] Or as one Khuzestan protestor aptly summarised: "in the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam's soldiers shot at our house, and today the soldiers of our

10 In 2006, amidst an assembly of masked indigenous militants gathered outside of the National Palace in Mexico City, where, over a loudspeaker, a masked speaker uttered the same logic but in their native tongue: "'Until death if it is needed!' I heard this sentence in 1992, in Tzeltal... in Tzotzil... Ch'ol, Tojoloab'al... I think also in Mam... and also in Spanish. In 1992, 500 years after the Spaniards came to conquer these lands. I heard it when our peoples, our men, women, children and elderly decided to take arms against the supreme government." Subcommandante Marcos, 'Until death if it is needed' *The Anarchist Library*, theanarchistlibrary.org. Accessed on 31 October 2021.

11 As Virilio put it with in his analysis of the Cambodian genocide: "Cambodia is the scale-model of the suicide State which no longer gathers populations in order to exploit territory, but which infinitely dissolves it. If they had let Pol Pot act as he saw fit, there would have been no one left. It was Robespierre, the Terror spread over an entire country. it would have meant Cambodia's disappearance. There wouldn't even have been any more executioners. A cartoon from 1793 symbolized the end of the Terror in France by the image of an executioner guillotining himself. That image was Cambodia." Paul Virilio / Sylvere Lotringer, Pure War: Twenty-Five Years Later, tr. Mark Polizzoti (Semiotext(e): 2008), 116. In view of the worsening climate emergency, this concept is also used by scholars to grasp the state-form proper to contemporary capitalism. For more on this see Iman Ganji, 'خوزستان: طغیان علیه دولت انتحاری' *Radio Zamaneh*, https://www.radiozamaneh.com/679693/. Accessed on 24 March 2022.

12 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press: 1984), 231, emphasis added.

own country [Iran] are doing the same."[13]

However, and much to the chagrin of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'the suicidal state' is a title whose honor it equally shares with the Zionist-state of Israel. As Gilles Deleuze already noted in his 1983 article, 'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat': "[Zionism] was clearly a matter of colonization, but not in the nineteenth-century European sense: the local inhabitants would not be exploited, they would be made to leave. Those who remained would be made, not into a dependent territorial workforce, but rather into a mobile and detached workforce, as if they were immigrants placed in a ghetto. From the start, lands are bought on the condition that they be empty of occupants, or can be emptied. It's a genocide, but one in which physical extermination remains subordinated to geographical evacuation...Physical extermination...is most certainly present. But this isn't a genocide, they say, since it's not the "final [solution]": in reality, it's just one means among others."[14] To heed Deleuze's words is to discover that the suicidal state is not simply a characteristic whose properiety is Iran's alone, but a title whose honor is shared by every regime for whom the 'final solution' is but another means of quelling social unrest.

The effects from a decades-long lack of investment in infrastructure and welfare, the destruction of ecosystems and living conditions, the domestic production of a 'surplus population' whose misery continuously increases, and the main face of neoliberalism in Iran (i.e. the military - extractivist complex around oil and petrochemical industry with its increasing precaritization of labor force)—all confront one another in Khuzestan.[15] It is for these reasons, then, that Khuzestan has witnessed the worst and most brutal aspects

13 Protestor, Khuzestan Province. Cited in 'Uprising of the Thirsty: An Analysis of the 2021 Khuzestan Protests,' Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRA), 7. Accessed on 20 March 2022.

14Gilles Deleuze, 'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat,' trans. Timothy Murphy, *Discourse*, 20:3, 30-33, 31. Emphasis added.

15 The Guardian report entitled "How Iran's Khuzestan went from wetland to wasteland?" refers to some of these policies. The revelations of Ahwaz's neo-conservative representative on national TV, as well as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in his video message, reveal another part of these policies, even if they want to call them the result of "mismanagement" and their perpetrators as a handful of "incompetent managers." Accessed on 3 May 2022.

of the Islamic Republic's 'suicidal State.' And yet, while it is indeed the case that "all of Khuzestan is thirsty," this political slogan ignores the gaps based on systematic discrimination against Arabs and other ethnic minorities. Discrimination—i.e. economic marginalization and deprivation—is accompanied by a lack of representation and recognition in the field of electoral politics. Marginal vis-à-visTehran, which serves as the national center; a margin that aids in the reproduction of both margin and center; the margin as a process that eliminates any difficulty in tracing the most immediately marginalized populations in this multi-layered process, for they are mostly Arabs. Thus, it is only by grasping the material and concrete reality of marginalization, in its process and its effects, that real solidarity becomes possible, just as it is important to recognize the differences of other ethnic minorities from the "Twelver Shiite Persians"[16] as the basis of the imagined and imposed national identity. If such expressions of transversal solidarity may have seemed unlikely in the past, many of the current acts of solidarity indicate the recognition of these intra-national and ethnic differences of Iran's domestic surplus populations.

The "Management" Fallacy

> Proponents of infrastructural schemes…often presented them as "democratizing" projects that would improve living conditions for peasants and hence lessen the appeal of communist or pan-Arabist ideas…In reality, however, development projects often helped to buttress state power and increase security and surveillance of rural populations.[17]

Against their better judgement, Iran's neoconservative critics tasked with analysing Khuzestan's situation have unwittingly disclosed the regime's discriminatory policies in their speeches. And yet, by ignoring the layers of systematic discrimination at the heart of those

16 The Shiite branch of Islam is itself divided to different subbranches, the most dominant of them are Twelver Shi'ism concentrated in Iran, Zaydism concentrated in Yemen, and Ismai'ilism that has followers in many countries in the Central and Western Asia.

17 Shima Houshyar, 'Engineering Waters: Dams, Modularity, and State Power in Cold War Iran,' *Jadaliyaa*. Jadaliyaa.com. Accessed on 19 April 2022.

same policies, they simply reduce the totality of social problems to a single issue: management. The 'management' fallacy is so pervasive that even critics of the Iranian government fall prey to the discursive trap of so-called 'mismanagement': "The driving force behind the July/August uprising was to protest the perennial water shortages and rolling blackouts *stemming from mismanagement* of resources, fuelling public anger."[18]

And yet, the problem of systematic discrimination and structural racism cannot be solved by improvements to "management." The struggle of the marginalized and surplus indigenous population is a fundamentally political struggle for equality and freedom, and this political element cannot be addressed by increasing degrees of centralization, which itself requires increasing degrees of violent repression for making good on its promise of "social peace." In this state-discourse, management is the name of an operation whose function is to cover up systemic, social, conflicts, and conflict resolution.

In any case, it is important to acknowledge that there remains a fundamental difference between the exercise of power against a structurally marginalized social "minority" and the exercise of power against social-groups compromising the national "majority." For it is a real, as opposed to ideal, difference that finds both its ground and its source in various material bases: from how prisoners are treated in prisons and how their families are treated, to how the security forces of the central state deal with protests in different regions, to the various policy and propaganda mechanisms for marginalizing and exploiting and extracting value without

18'Uprising of the Thirsty,' 8, emphasis added.

recognizing any value in those exploited.[19]

The "Natural" Fallacy

On the other side of the discursive spectrum, one argument wants to relate all the problems in Khuzestan to nature and the effects of anthropogenic climate change, such as the increased frequency of droughts throughout the region.[20] The first lesson that climate change has taught us is the fully human-made dimension of nature. It was clear from the outset that the climate damage caused by global warming would harm the marginalized communities, the poor and the most vulnerable more than others. These communities were primarily threatened because a centralist power marginalized or targeted them for exploitation and discrimination. The political and economic aspect of necropolitics is a deadly policy of producing entire populations whose existence is superfluous relative to the requirements for improving the geopolitical status of the nation-state vis-à-vis the global market. As Marx observed: "The working population…produces both the accumulation of capital and the means by which it is itself made relatively superfluous; and it does this to an extent which is always increasing. *This is the law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production*."[21]

Additionally important is the inverse relationship between investing in increasingly militarized forms of national security and privitizing greater portions of public welfare (healthcare, housing,

19As Fadi Bardawil put it with respect to the extraction of value from those deemed as unproductive, or from forms of social activity that have be seen as "pre-modern" insofar as they are characterized as "tradition:" "Julia Elyachar's brilliant ethnographic *Markets of Dispossession* shows how, by the late twentieth century, international organizations, the Egyptian state, and nongovernmental organizations attempted to produce new economic value by transforming social networks and culture of Cairo craftsmen into value. Nineteenth-century British colonial rulers such as Lord Cromer, twentieth-century modernizers, and historians of labor, Elyachar argues, put the indigenous cultural practices on the side of tradition, backwardness, and impediments to progress and development. *Culture, which was thought to be an obstacle to modernity, was later incorporated into the market as a new source of economic value.*" For more see Fadi Bardawil, *Revolution and Disenchantment* (Duke University Press: 2020), p. 191, emphasis added.

20 "The Iranian Meteorological Organization has estimated that 97 percent of the country is experiencing drought to some degree."'Iranian Security Forces Set Protesters' Tents On Fire In 'Clean-Up' Operation In Isfahan,' Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, www.rferl.org. Accessed on 10 September 2021.

21 Karl Marx, *Capital vol. 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin: 1976), 784. Emphasis added.

infrastructure) characteristic of suicidal states. While hundreds of villages, especially in predominantly Arab regions, have been denied access to water by a government explicitly refusing any future investment in urban/blue infrastructure projects or for the maintenance of already-deteriorating public services (healthcare, unemployment relief, and education), Iran's military bases in Khuzestan are increasingly equipped with the most advanced weapons while ground forces of the Revolutionary Guard, Basij, etc., hold military exercises with increased regularity.

Tackling climate change requires massive investment to increase resilience. Those who have taken to the streets do not have the least facilities to sustain life at the very beginning of this climate emergency, let alone in the not-too-distant future when the climate crisis becomes visibly out of control. It is impossible to relate such a predicament to "nature." Rather, it is clearly related to racial discrimination as a structuring principle of the order and connection of Iran's social body, wherein an individual's degree of deviation from the norm corresponding to the degree to which the lives and freedom of one segment of the population comes at the price of the death and misery of another. Racialization is a constitutive element of this political economy that is made possible by mechanisms of juridical and socio-political exclusion, alienation, and marginalization.

The construction of dams; water transfers; the burning of vegetation for oil extraction and other extraction related needs; the application of oil mulch to the surface of soil; the establishment of unsustainable industries in the region and at the same time not employing local labor force in them—these are policies that become possible insofar as Iran's national policy continues its long standing tradition of ignoring the growing segments of its population for whom their "form-of-life" is inseparable from their ecosystem. Regardless of what the current regime may claim regarding the problems surrounding the 'management' of both resources and the

compounding effects of anthropogenic climate change, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues the pre-Revolutionary tradition of drawing upon colonial discourses of the inefficient and/or wasteful management of resources by indigenous populations, which then served as the justification for further developmental projects overseen and controlled by the State itself.

The Islamic Republic has yet to find way to escape historical irony, for the current regime continues to view the ethnic diversity of Khuzestan's inhabitants, not simply in pre-Revolutionary terms, but in terms originally developed by the American engineers hired by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi to oversee the development of Iran's infrastructure in the 1950s and 1960s: "For example, a 1957 memo compared the social structures of Khuzestani Arab [sic] tribal life to Native American tribes. This memo was written by E. Reeseman "Sy" Fryer, who had been a managing agent for the Navajo Nation under the US Bureau of Indian Affairs. In Fryer's colonial imagination, Arab Khuzestanis, just like the Navajo, were 'resource primitives'—that is, populations that either waste or do not use resources efficiently, and therefore require technopolitical interventions."[22]

Class & Solidarity

To insist on racialisation as an essential component in processes of marginalisation is not to dismiss the salience of class.Rather, it means that to speak of "class interests" obliges us to account for the internal differences and divisions generated via processes of marginalization, i.e. race and gender. What is more, this two-fold process of marginalization not only defines the very character of a given class—revolutionary, reformist, reactionary—since these internal divisions of the social division of labor function as the conditions for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. If it is only through collective struggle, organized in accordance

22 Houshyar, 'Engineering Waters: Dams, Modularity, and State Power in Cold War Iran.'

with the concrete and material reality of class as racially and sexually constructed, engendered in particular bodies that the effectuation of relations of solidarity is achieved, it is in the riot that Khuzestan's substitution of relations of exchange for relations of solidarity becomes a real, rather than logical, possibility. In order to rediscover the existence of a potential solidarity in the present, one is obliged to develop an analysis of capitalism's contemporary organization of society that is able to account for that which is absorbed, but not fully realized, by capital's processes of commodity production (accumulation) and self-reproduction (valorization). That is to say, we must return to the processes that have given rise to this fragmentation and division amongst social groups (i.e. their 'unity-in-separation'[23]) with respect to both the productive and reproductive forces of capital itself.

The creation of rigid lines drawn for this acute fragmentarity is based on two mechanisms. One is the macro-mechanism of exclusion and categorization, a system that works on the basis of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and finally class. Another is a micro-mechanism of segmentation, determined by new forms of contract-labor that is both precarious and temporary in essence, and realized in the online services sector, via the outsourcing of contracting and the exponential growth of both bosses and employers, and corroborated by the most recent ideological iteration that is quick to celebrate "flexibility," "innovation," "entrepreneurship," and every other misfortune that befalls the class of the exploited. Both processes of exclusion-categorization and segmentation produce their own hierarchies and their attendant margins and surplus populations. The gaps that these systemic mechanisms create at the heart of the productive and reproductive forces of society provide the state with better means of abstract management while

23 As *Endnotes*, correctly, explains: "Here is the unity-in-separation of market society. People become ever more interdependent through the market, but this power comes at the expense of their capacities for collective action. Capitalist society reduces workers to petty commodity sellers, providing them with some autonomy, but always within limits. In hindsight, it is clear that the dream of the workers' movement—that an "actual unity" of workers, as opposed to their unity-in-separation, would be realised in the factories through the further development of the productive forces—was not true. *Such an actual unity can come about only by means of a communist transcendence of capitalist social relations*." For more see Endnotes 4, 'A History of Separation.' Accessed 4 May 2022.

preventing the formation of any solidarity across these divisions.

In Khuzestan, there are people in the streets protesting against a state that has not "invested" in them; in the eyes of a suicidal state, their lives are "worthless" pure and simple. The question of what a surplus life is worth and the value of unnecessary/unproductive social activity vis-à-vis the capitalist organization of social existence, however, is something entirely different. This is because the logic of racialization recomposes capitalist totality such that surplus populations find themselves confronted by a continually decreasing set of possible avenues for satisfying the requirements for their social reproduction. And when combined with the process of de-proletarianization and the increasing precarization of the labor force in a place like the Iranian oil and petrochemical industry, the racial division of Iran's domestic division of labour necessarily pushes a portion of total available labor-power out of the cycle of valorization, and thus builds its "reserve army." It is for these reasons that the recognition of these gaps and mechanisms, the recognition of a particular, ethnic/gender/social groups' marginalization, constitutes the first step in building solidarity against a system whose existence requires the continued existence of poverty, immiseration, and alienation such that our 'unity-in-separation' serves as further proof of the *despotism of capital*:

[A]s soon as, by setting up trade unions, etc., they try to organize planned co-operation between the employed and the unemployed in order to obviate or to weaken the ruinous effects of this natural law of capitalist production on their class, so soon does capital and its sycophant, political economy, cry out at the infringement of the 'central' and so to speak 'sacred' law of supply and demand. Every combination between employed and unemployed disturbs the 'pure' action of this law.[24]

With respect to the processes of exclusion-categorization, that the

24 Capital vol. I, 793-94, emphasis added.

protests in Khuzestan gain in additional significance, since they can inform us about the mechanisms of the first category, just as the months-long strike by oil company contract workers has alerted us to the second mechanisms. The potential solidarity between struggles against exclusion-categorisation and against new forms of contract labour is made possible by understanding these mechanisms.

Subdivision of Labour; Assassination of the People [25]

Capital "is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things"[26] and survives by virtue of the institutions of its reproduction. At the same time, contemporary capitalism has actively deterritorialized the boundaries of the means of production and the regions of value extraction, creating the conditions that can transform its value production center from profitability by direct intervention in production to a parasitic capture of surplus value as extracted rent. To do this, capital must provide the ground for as much cooperation as possible between productive and reproductive bodies, and at the same time control and limit this cooperation. The cooperation of wage-labourers, writes Marx, "is entirely brought about by the capital that employs them. Their unification into one single productive body, and the establishment of a connection between their individual functions, lies outside their competence. These things are not their own act, but the act of the capital that brings them together and maintains them in that situation. Hence the interconnection between their various labours confronts them, in the realm of ideas, as a plan drawn up by the capitalist, and, in practice, as his authority, as the powerful will of a being outside them, who subjects their activity to his purpose. If capitalist

25 "To subdivide a man is to execute him, if he deserves the sentence, to assassinate him if he does not […] The subdivision of labour is the assassination of the people." D. Urquhart, *Familiar Words* (London: 1855), 119, (Quoted in *Capital vol. I,* 485, fn.51. Emphasis added).

26 Capital vol. I, 932.

direction is thus twofold in content…in form it is purely despotic. As co-operation extends in scale, this despotism develops the forms that are peculiar to it."[27]

Despite the fact that the result of immiseration and fragmentation is the increase in capital's means of control via the compulsion of individual workers to labour in cooperation with all other waged-labourers (i.e. cooperation), what has been called the mass intellect or collective intelligence is still growing beyond the capacity of the processes of capitalist integration and therefore suggests a social phenomena that eludes its complete absorption into the valorization process. Or, put another way: it is by means of this unabsorbed surplus of cooperation in the process of capital reproduction that, perhaps, we can construct solidarities beyond the rigid lines of dismemberment of the social body, and begin to envision a form of social reproduction that does not necessarily reproduce capitalist social relations as well.

Extractivist capitalism is present in Iran in both conventional and contemporary forms. One is the extraction of oil and gas and other kinds of wealth that is extracted from the land. In the case of Khuzestan, oil and gas extraction is a major factor in the destruction of the ecosystem, and the resulting wealth is not redistributed to indigenous communities in oil-rich lands. The other is extraction through financial capitalism (stock exchanges, credit institutions, etc.) and through the flexibilization of the domestic labour market, which has resulted in the substitution of full-time employment as the norm of employment with an increasingly precarious working class coupled with the increasing prevalence of online businesses. It is in these forms of contemporary extractivist capitalism that we can recognize what Saskia Sassen calls the expulsion of populations

27 Ibid., 449-450.

"at the systemic edges."[28] Referring to the dynamics of producing surplus populations, Sassen writes:

> *[T]here is a mix of conditions often coded with the seemingly neutral term of 'a growing surplus population'. A key underlying condition of this "surplus" is the growing expanse of territory that is devastated—by poverty and disease, by various kinds of armed conflict, by foreign corporations, and by governments rendered dysfunctional by acute corruption and a crippling international debt-regime, both leading to an extreme inability to address their peoples' needs.*[29]

Sassen calls this emerging situation an "extreme loss of habitat" and describes it as an " an expulsion from their life space — for people, but also for land and for water," which is the result of what she calls contemporary "advanced capitalism."[30] Thus, from the perspective of their "single enemy" — the specific form of neoliberal capitalism in Iran's theocratic dictatorship, i.e. Iranian "formal subsumption" under capital — struggles ranging from the 1400/2021 summer protests to the oil workers' strike and other forms of labor and environmental protests could be potentially in solidarity because different forms of the same systemic procedures have led to the current state of workers and the marginalized, the destruction of social life and the destruction of the natural ecosystem. Those who do not show (or oppose) solidarity with the Arabs and other marginalized people of the national question (Kurds, Baluchis, etc.) are in fact responding to the systemic fear of

28 Saskia Sassen, 'At the Systemic Edge: Expulsion,' *Resisting Biopolitics: Philosophical, Political, and Performative Strategies*, ed. SE Wilmer and Audronė Žukauskaitė (Routledge, 2016).

29 Ibid, 219.

30 Ibid, 220.

supposedly losing their special privileges as subjects closer to the center. The very impetus that strengthened far-right movements in Europe after the so-called "migration crisis": the fear of losing the privilege of being white, the fear that is systematically produced to perpetuate the unjust process of wealth redistribution. The bi-univocal taxonomy of colorism according to skin that is white and skin that is not white are two subjective discursive positions that can reproduce themselves in any context, including Iran.

It is for these reasons that solidarity is essential to counter the identity politics pursued by the central government based on "national identity", and to address the gaps imposed by this politics, which are part of the population control tactics of governmentality, and to avoid the vicious circle of identitarian competition. Absent these relations of solidarity; these forms of living that actively coordinate different subject positions, such that it is a shared horizon of collective emancipation that grounds this *transversal* politics of particular differences; absent this form of life that is simultaneously a form of struggle, death is all but certain. For the present conjuncture continues to pronounce what amounts to a death-sentence on the part of Khuzestan's inhabitants. This judgement is made all the worse due to a regime that, "at every moment legislates by...prohibiting or strictly limiting metamorphoses...requiring subjects to die in order to pass from one form to the other." For regimes such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, "social prohibitions against metamorphosis [the fundamental transformation of society]" becomes one of the most important, and revealing, elements in the repertoire of the State's attempts at preventing the appearance of the bonds of solidarity, while, at every turn, revealing the death that it has "interposed between classes"[31] in its place.

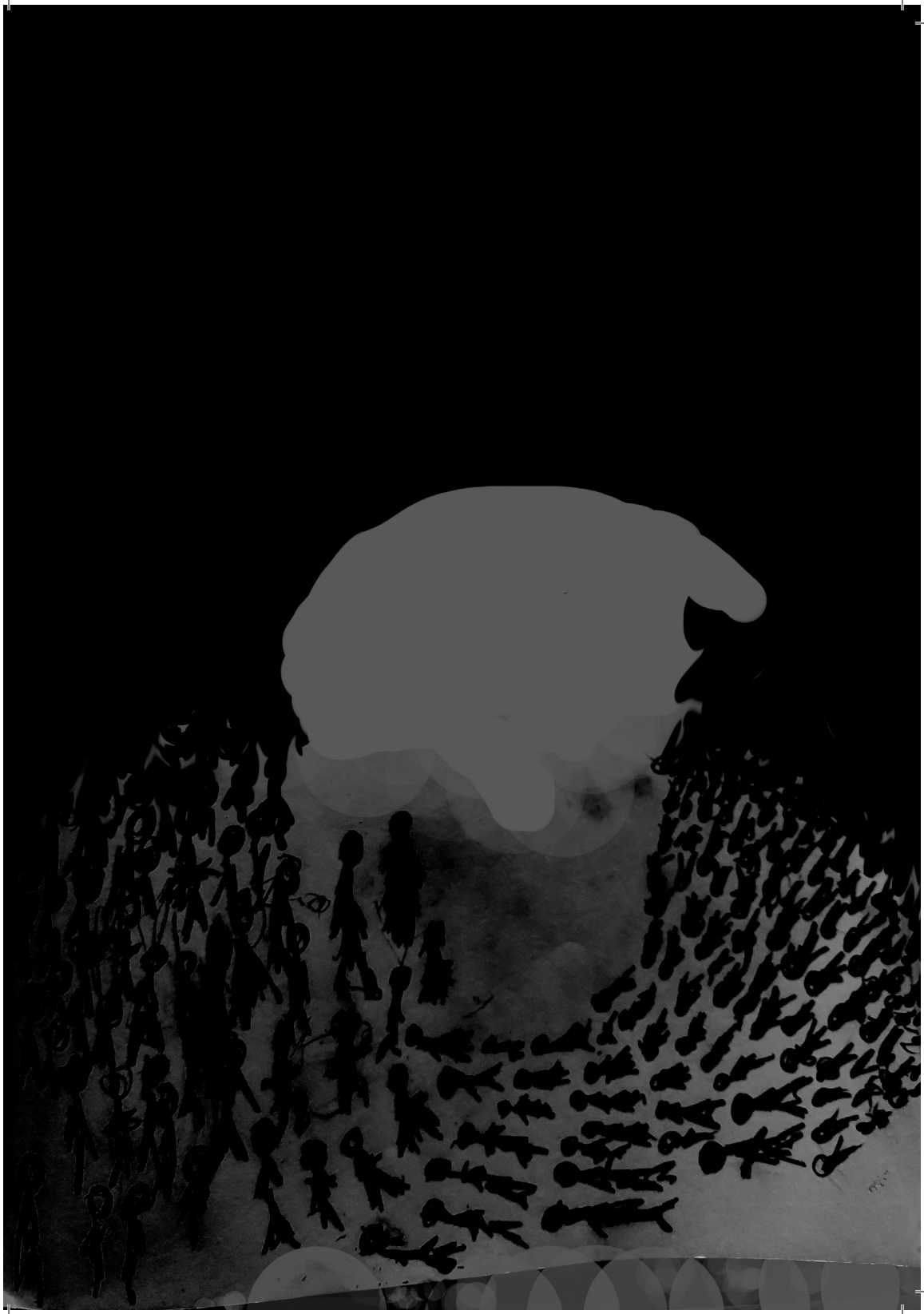
Let us now return to Ahmad Mahmoud's *Our Small City.* With his knife, Musa Sarmeydani wanted to crush "that lanky *Farangi* [European, white]." Musa continues: "First of all, I will cut his head

31 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 107-08.

from ear to ear" because he did not know where else he could go to live. "*Where am I going to live*? *I toiled for a lifetime to build this house*." The anti-colonial struggle of indigenous peoples against the historical genesis of so-called primitive accumulation under colonization is now the struggle of the urban poor and marginalized social groupings against endocolonialism. کل الک للتهجیر.. And this considered-surplus population whose homes and habitats are being destroyed, in both cases, are fighting against the necropolitics with the logic of "either this ... or that", and each time they are imprisoned and shot:

> *Yadollah Roumzi had been taken to Nazmieh [police station], just as Khaj Tawfiq had been taken away and my father had been taken away and Nasser Davani and Baba Khan had been taken away ... It was not dark that Noor Mohammad came with his thin chin and narrow eyes, and my mother had tears on her face when she heard Noor Mohammad's saying: "Sister, tell Khaj Tawfiq, or if he is not, his children to receive the Afagh's body." "Afaq's body?" "Yes, sister, last night, she was shot behind the date palm tree oasis."*[32]

32 Mahmoud, *Our Small City*, 96, (authors translation).



TRESPASS TO ODE

SPINDALWORT

Publish under 'SpindalWort'

Glinting barbs partition a prison,
Padlocked, bordered, every inch accounted for lawful precision,
An evil squire patrols his patch,
Gates bolted, secured and latched.
Bridleways, foot paths, old tracks overgrown,
Meanwhile the provincial sovereign the squire sits alone.
Sole beneficiary and descendant of Lords,
It is for this injustice we lay down our swords.

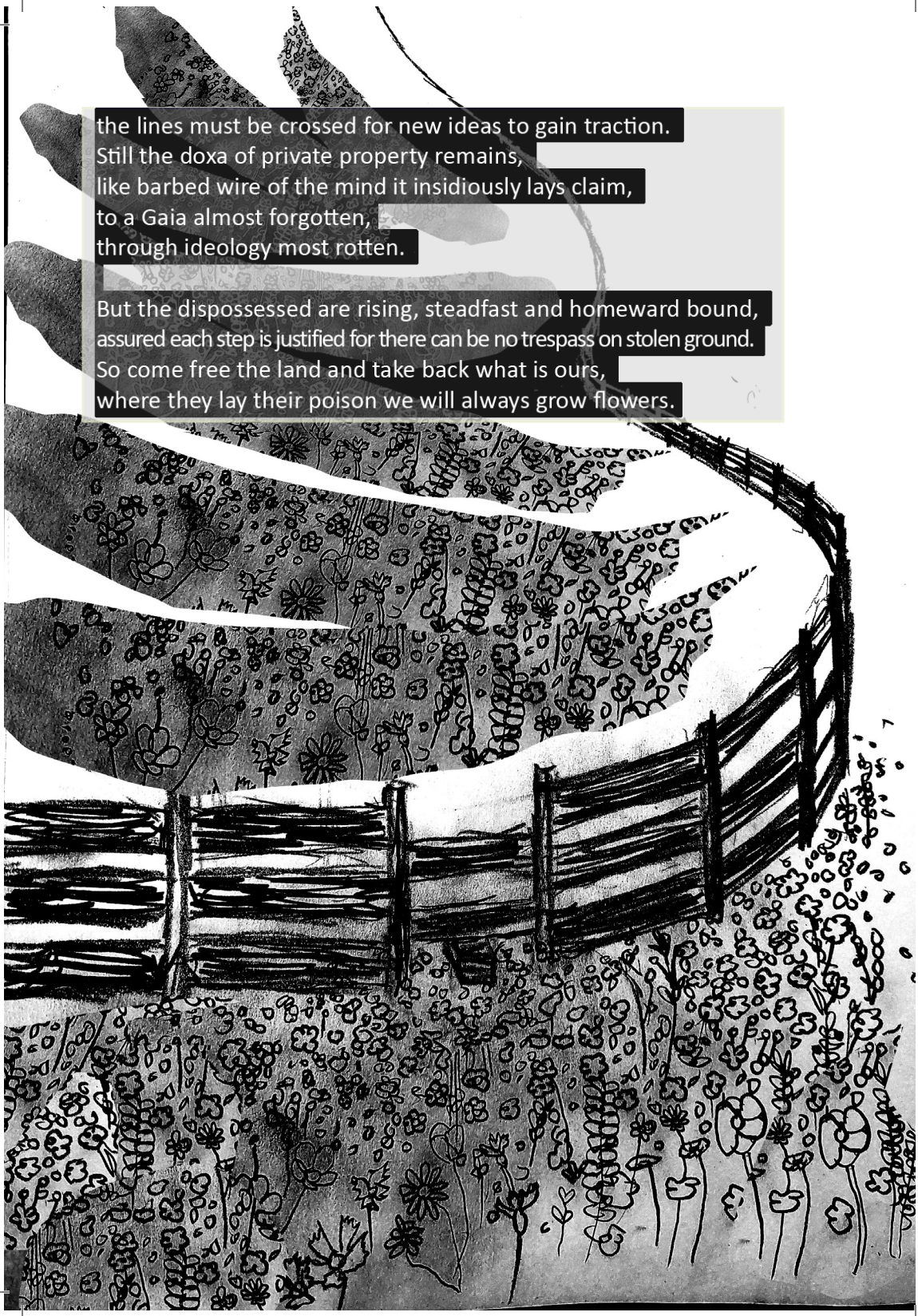
For who dares to pass where thou shalt not?
To reclaim the land where thou shalt not.
Every footstep, wire snip, every bolt now cut,
leads us to freedom, old powers unstuck.
So defend our right to roam and reside,
No baton wielding pig line may quell this great tide.
For the attempt to implement such facist legislation,
must be met with fists and rage in growing concentration.

Come ye vagabonds, vagrants and trespassers of old,
there's a long history to be unwound and new stories told.
From the Norman Forest Laws,
curtailing the right to gather woodland stores,
creating hunting grounds for horsebacked gentry,
Denying locals their livelihoods in refusing their entry.
And the infamous enclosures imposed a patchwork of private estate,
the commoner's lives and livestock forced to abdicate.
Hedges and fences erected to mark deprivation,
forever scarring the landscape in legacy of the common's desecration.

Yet the Diggers, the squatters, the riotous oppressed,
mounted resistance and the boundaries of exclusion were put to test.
From the Mass Kinder Trespass to the reclamation of One Tree Hill,
such defiance en masse bears relevance still.
These transgressions of troublesome heathens,
seek to embody the truth that trespass is freedom.
From the garden of Eden to the vast estate of Richard Drax,
we will not accept these walls as facts.

These lines drawn in sand by the authority's hand,
cannot remain unquestioned we must take a stand.
The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act sets a malicious precedent,
that villifies transience and roadside residence.
By attacking the foundation of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller subsistence,
criminalising trespass is racist legislation of historical persistence.
Further marginalising folks with no fixed abode,
outlawing the age old tradition of a life on the road.

So scale the walls and break down the borders,
to rally against oppression and the dominant world order.
The old ways are stinking, stagnating and stale,
a new Albion awaits behind the illusory veil.
For trespass is freedom exerted in action,



the lines must be crossed for new ideas to gain traction.
Still the doxa of private property remains,
like barbed wire of the mind it insidiously lays claim,
to a Gaia almost forgotten,
through ideology most rotten.

But the dispossessed are rising, steadfast and homeward bound,
assured each step is justified for there can be no trespass on stolen ground.
So come free the land and take back what is ours,
where they lay their poison we will always grow flowers.

Imagination is Activism

Creating joy in Hassockfield

Mymona Bibi

Currently, there are fourteen immigration detention centres in the UK. Most of these detention centres are based in rural areas with beautiful countryside views that the detainees do not get to enjoy. Unfortunately, detention is not presented by law as a criminal procedure but rather an administrative process which hides the horrors detainees suffer from the general public. Indeed, some believe it is worse than prison sentences, where prisoners are aware of their release date, whilst in detention centres, detainees are locked away from life indefinitely. These detention centres are run by large, multi-billion-pound profit-fuelled companies like Mitie and Serco. This means that the safety and care of these refugees and asylum seekers sits at the feet of industry and enterprise: profit is prioritised over human life and wellbeing. It is no surprise then, that refugees only receive eight pounds a week and little to no food, resources, or access to life outside their detention centres or hotels. Thus, we must explore how the land can be used better for justice and equality.

Hassockfield in Durham is the detention centre closest to me and one I learnt about very recently through friends active in the Abolish Detention campaign. This particular detention centre was previously

a school for 'wayward' boys that was closed down due to hundreds of sexual abuse cases arising from the school. Now, it detains and abuses the rights of women seeking asylum. The women detained here have no contact with people other than those investigating their existence in the UK. Indeed, the denial of freedom, justice, and basic human rights to the people on the land, is an abuse of the land itself. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the detention centre is privatised and monetised, therefore, the torture and injustice inflicted on detainees is a source of profit for Mitie and its various stakeholders.

During the Ewan Brown Anarchist Book Fair on the 21st of May, Abolish Detention invited workshop participants to imagine a world in which such injustices did not exist.

I closed my eyes and felt my feet firmly planted on the ground. The first image I saw was the area around Hassockfield, the greenery, the hills, the space filled with activity: with mothers playing with their children and communing over touch, connection, and love; with children exploring the fauna and flora and their own physical strengths by climbing trees; with welcoming signage and the buzz of countless languages being spoken at once. I felt that I was a guest invited to share good memories and good moments, which told me how this plot of land could be someone's home, someone's childhood memory, someone's Sunday afternoon. There was a sense that time and space was controlled by those enjoying it, these families had the freedom to choose when to be there and when to leave and, thus, they had the power to determine how the land looked. What excited me was that I saw something that doesn't exist now: the space exactly as it should be – fruitful, full of joy, and abundant with flourishing life.

Right now, this exact land that I was imagining is being used for purposes entirely opposite: for the criminalisation of immigration and the execution of physical and psychological trauma on the

world's most vulnerable: mothers and their children fleeing war and oppression. Instead of supporting these vulnerable people, these detention centres actively break down human connections and hinder social development between and amongst peoples. The humanity of these people is eaten away by their detention and the space is, thus, currently life-denying and hollow.

This war and oppression has almost entirely been created by the very same capitalist state power that has created these detention centres. Right now, we have walls and borders that have limited the effective use of our land; where the land could help the development of people nationally and internationally, the land is instead used to break down connection and development. This state power has promised security to racist populations whilst inciting mass murder and violence across borders. In this way, the state has been propagating racism and using this to build walls. It creates a cyclical feedback loop in which higher walls, stronger borders, and increased detention rates amplify racist voices and policies. The imagination I had created in a communal setting has helped me to realise how much I don't want that, and how much I am willing to help with stopping it.

Using imagination as a tool for activism allows us to motivate and see the good in the small actions we take. Activism is often viewed as a big action or a big role taken on by privileged individuals. Indeed, paying attention to small actions can encourage more people to take part in activism and be proactive in seeking justice for themselves as well as for others. These small actions could vary from attending monthly protests at Hassockfield, contacting friends and families of detainees, speaking about the injustice itself. The smallest action, and perhaps the catalyst of every action after, is to imagine a world where this injustice does not occur and to share that imagination. This first act of imagination can bring strength to the individual and strength to the community. Working backwards from an imagination also helps campaigns find structure and organisation by recognising

what is needed to make that imagination a reality. Imagination breaks barriers that are often built by powerful, racist institutions and allows the individual to speculate about possibilities. Being able to imagine Hassockfield as a place of joy in natural beauty shows me both personally and as a member of a community what the options are and what I value. This imaginative experience shows us what these people deserve and can achieve.

Marginalised communities are often told not to imagine beyond their limited and controlled circumstances, which hinders the development and the growth of the individual and the community. However, imagination is a resistance to reality and, therefore, the first step against injustice. Indeed, activism is imagination and imagination is activism.

IMAGINATION
IS
ACTIVISM

Immigration and Political Discourse: 1960s to Brexit

Sean Waite

The issue of immigration has been particularly contentious for the past decade in Britain. Fears fueled by migration from the Middle East after the Arab Spring in 2011, as well as frictionless freedom of movement within the European Union (EU), resulted in the UK controversially closing the door on widespread immigration. **This was symbolised by the Tory-fueled 'Brexit' vote of 2016, which was part of the broader trend in far-right anti-immigrantion sentiment that swept across Europe during the 2010s.** As the fierce public debate around immigration rages on, it makes sense to take stock and see how such discourse unfolded in previous decades. Using primary source material drawn from the British Online Archives' *Policymaking and Revolutionary Politics, 1924-1991* collection, this essay will assess the contemporary continuity with immigration debates during the post-war period. The collection is drawn from the files of the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The Political Committee was "the main directive

body within the party" (Morgan, 2020), and, as such, the featured material offers a variety of leftist perspectives on key events **and issues** in domestic politics. This provides a useful resource for exploring how discourses surrounding immigration were developed in 1960s Britain. Using this as a foundation, this essay will draw parallels to the immigration debate of the past decade, arguing that much of the discourse surrounding immigration has remained consistent.

Migration at the Dark Heart of Empire

Long before mass migration reached its shores, Britain had weaponised migration for its own benefits. It is estimated that between 1640 and 1807 Britain forcibly enslaved over 3 million Africans and brought them to toil on the brutal plantations of the Americas. Much of Britain's wealth was built on the back of this exploitation. The Transatlantic Slave Trade was not the only weaponising of migration that occurred in the British Empire. It is also estimated that between 1787 and 1868 over 162,000 British and Irish convicts were forcibly sent to Australia during its period as a penal colony. Thus, from the earliest developments of the British state, migration had been mobilised as a tool for ruthless economic profit and a remedy to social problems such as crime. Weaponised migration had contributed to the essence of British 'greatness', a sense of pride in Britain built on the back of massive wealth brought to Britain via the slave trade, as well its ever expanding colonial assets all over the globe.

Roxanne Doty (1996: 247) explains how, during the apex of the British Empire, 'Commonwealth discourse' was built around inclusionary and universalistic sentiments that transcended national, ethnic, or religious boundaries. Through this discourse, elites emphasised that all British subjects were said to share a common allegiance to Britain. This included obeying its laws,

serving its protection when duty called, and following its traditions. At least publicly, this was a useful rhetorical device which framed the expansion of the British Empire as a benevolent force of harmony, helping the world via its 'civilising mission'. Despite this public rhetoric, behind the veil of Commonwealth and imperialist sentiments based on unity and common identity, it was clear that whiteness was considered supreme. Just one manifestation of this was how local colonial rulers circumvented the facade of Home Office discourse to exclude migration of Chinese, Indian, and African populations to British colonies like Australia and South Africa (see Huttenback, 1973). This primacy of whiteness would go on to inform Britain's perception of immigration from the 1960s right through until today.

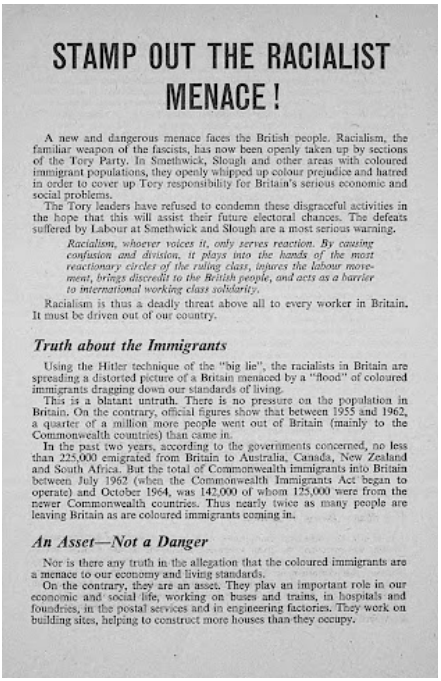
Migration in the Post-War Period

After the Second World War, Britain was suffering not only massive economic damage, but a drastic labour shortage after losing so many young healthy men on the battlefields of Europe. This gave rise to the British government encouraging its colonial subjects to move *en masse* to Britain to fill the labour shortage. The arrival of this new 'Windrush' generation, named after the first steamship that docked into London, started in 1948 and ended with the passing of the restrictive Immigration Act 1971 by Edward Heath's government. This remains one of the most pivotal periods in the formation of Britain's current demographic makeup, with large numbers of Caribbean and Indian migrants arriving for the opportunity to rebuild devastated post-war Britain.

Mass migration was controversial from the start, with the still colonial British establishment shocked at the number of Caribbean migrants arriving on Britain's shores. In June 1950, a Cabinet committee was established to investigate "ways which might be adopted to check the immigration into this country of coloured

people from British colonial territories" (quoted in Turner, 2003). Thus, from the start, we need to recognise the emergence of the unofficial hierarchy of immigrants that was established by the British state and **crystallised in** public attitudes more generally. It was clear that the UK desired the 'right' type of immigrants, from the white, English-speaking countries like Australia and the United States. Discrimination on the basis of colour would become key to the Communist Party of Great Britain's criticism of the political establishment.

Contesting 'Racialism' in British Immigration Policy



STAMP OUT THE RACIALIST MENACE!

A new and dangerous menace faces the British people. Racialism, the familiar weapon of the fascists, has now been openly taken up by sections of the Tory Party. In Smethwick, Slough and other areas with coloured immigrant populations, they openly whipped up colour prejudice and hatred in order to cover up Tory responsibility for Britain's serious economic and social problems.

The Tory leaders have refused to condemn these disgraceful activities in the hope that this will assist their future electoral chances. The defeats suffered by Labour at Smethwick and Slough are a most serious warning.

Racialism, whoever voices it, only serves reaction. By causing confusion and division, it plays into the hands of the most reactionary circles of the ruling class, injures the labour movement, brings discredit to the British people, and acts as a barrier to international working class solidarity.

Racialism is thus a deadly threat above all to every worker in Britain. It must be driven out of our country.

Truth about the Immigrants

Using the Hitler technique of the "big lie", the racialists in Britain are spreading a distorted picture of a Britain menaced by a "flood" of coloured immigrants dragging down our standards of living.

This is a blatant untruth. There is no pressure on the population in Britain. On the contrary, official figures show that between 1955 and 1962, a quarter of a million more people went out of Britain (mainly to the Commonwealth countries) than came in.

In the past two years, according to the governments concerned, no less than 225,000 emigrated from Britain to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. But the total of Commonwealth immigrants into Britain between July 1962 (when the Commonwealth Immigrants Act began to operate) and October 1964, was 142,000 of whom 125,000 were from the newer Commonwealth countries. Thus nearly twice as many people are leaving Britain as are coloured immigrants coming in.

An Asset—Not a Danger

Nor is there any truth in the allegation that the coloured immigrants are a menace to our economy and living standards.

On the contrary, they are an asset. They play an important role in our economic and social life, working on buses and trains, in hospitals and foundries, in the postal services and in engineering factories. They work on building sites, helping to construct more houses than they occupy.

In 1965, the Communist Party of Great Britain published a pamphlet titled "Stamp Out The Racialist Menace!" (pictured above), which proclaimed that immigrants in Britain were being used as scapegoats to cover the failings of both government and exploitative capitalist business practices. The line taken here is unsurprising, given how Marxists largely saw nationalism as undermining the international solidarity of the working class in their struggle against capitalism. In this pamphlet, the CPGB official line links "racialist" attitudes to fascism and Nazism, playing on the lingering trauma of the Second World War and trying to demonstrate that racism is a short road to the horrors of fascism.

In 1945, the Soviet Union was popular with the British public, having spent four years as Britain's close ally against Nazi Germany. By proxy, the CPGB was also a beneficiary of this newfound respect, earning over 100,000 votes and returning two MPs to the House of Commons at the 1945 General Election (Beckett, 1995: 98). Consequently, by likening anti-immigration views to fascism during the Second World War, the CPGB was attempting to use its historical credibility to influence the contemporary debate on immigration.

Within this pamphlet we can see many continuities between the anti-immigration arguments of the 1960s and the anti-immigration arguments of today. The CPGB identifies the common trope around immigration that has unfortunately persisted in British society. Namely, that immigration represents a major threat to economic and social security in Britain because of the perceived pressures that it puts on the National Health Service, the housing sector, and the labour market. In his analysis of the UK's Brexit debate, Stuart Gietel-Baston has stated that politicians and media outlets weaponised this same myth and presented the electorate with an 'oversimplified' perspective on the nature of immigration (2016: 674-675). By now, we are all very familiar with the idea that immigrants are "stealing" British jobs or houses. Indeed, United Kingdom Independence Party leader Nigel Farage echoed these sentiments when he stated that 'unprecedented' immigration was causing a 'strain' on 'every part of our national life' in 2013 (Grierson, 2018: *The Guardian*).

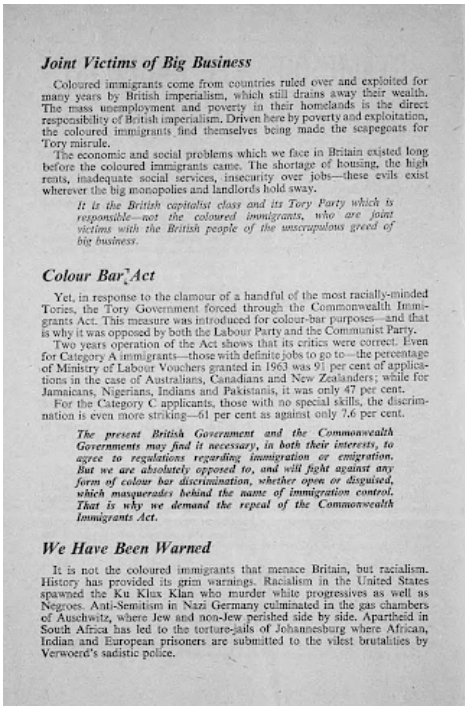
We can see continuity not only in economic arguments but the precise prose of the language. The pamphlet refers to anti-immigration rhetoric which labelled movement into Britain as a 'flood', **conceptualising migration as** a natural disaster that wreaked havoc on infrastructure and people. This language is eerily similar to David Cameron's use of the word "swarm" to describe

the arrival of refugees from countries affected by the Arab Spring during the 2010s (Cameron, interviewed by BBC News: 2015).

Numerous other studies have shown how prominent this pervasive choice of language has become in **Britain's public discourse**. For example, Charlotte Taylor aptly explores how the language that the British print media used to describe Afghani refugees serves as a 'metaphorical frame which depicts them as non-human' (2014: 390). Additionally, Ariel Spigelman (2013) finds that, after the ascension of Poland to the European Union in 2004, the British press consistently identified Polish immigrants with the dehumanising language of natural disasters. Thus, although nearly sixty years have passed since the CPGB called out hostile language directed towards immigrants, powerful sections of society still persist in using this rhetorical device.

Another key argument the pamphlet contains, one which was noticeably absent from the Brexit debate, is the idea that immigrants actually represent 'an asset' to Britain. The pamphlet outlines immigrants' contribution to vital services and to 'economic and social life' in general. Stuart Gietel-Baston (2016: 677-678) notes that during the Brexit debate this positive argument about immigration was missing from public discourse. Entrenched hostility towards immigration from politicians and the media, who had long blamed immigrants for societal ills, had become an accepted truth that no one was willing to challenge. The Labour Party's turn to embrace anti-immigration policies, an episode farcically captured when the party started selling a mug with the slogan 'Controls on Immigration' printed on it (Bush, 2015: *The New Statesman*), is symbolic of this shift. Almost nobody was willing to make a positive case for immigration in Britain when the issue became most acute. This raises a broader point about political discourse in Britain. For all its obscene Stalinist tendencies, with the dissolution of the CPGB in 1991, Britain lost an important progressive political

voice that argued for unfashionable causes and vulnerable groups, particularly in a context where right-wing framing of immigration as problematic was becoming "hegemonic" during the 1960s (Doty, 1996: 251).



Joint Victims of Big Business

Coloured immigrants come from countries ruled over and exploited for many years by British imperialism, which still drains away their wealth. The mass unemployment and poverty in their homelands is the direct responsibility of British imperialism. Driven here by poverty and exploitation, the coloured immigrants find themselves being made the scapegoats for Tory misrule.

The economic and social problems which we face in Britain existed long before the coloured immigrants came. The shortage of housing, the high rents, inadequate social services, insecurity over jobs—these evils exist wherever the big monopolies and landlords hold sway.

It is the British capitalist class and its Tory Party which is responsible—not the coloured immigrants, who are joint victims with the British people of the unscrupulous greed of big business.

Colour Bar Act

Yet, in response to the clamour of a handful of the most racially-minded Tories, the Tory Government forced through the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. This measure was introduced for colour-bar purposes—and that is why it was opposed by both the Labour Party and the Communist Party.

Two years operation of the Act shows that its critics were correct. Even for Category A immigrants—those with definite jobs to go to—the percentage of Ministry of Labour Vouchers granted in 1963 was 91 per cent of applications in the case of Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders; while for Jamaicans, Nigerians, Indians and Pakistanis, it was only 47 per cent.

For the Category C applicants, those with no special skills, the discrimination is even more striking—61 per cent as against only 7.6 per cent.

The present British Government and the Commonwealth Governments may find it necessary, in both their interests, to agree to regulations regarding immigration or emigration. But we are absolutely opposed to, and will fight against any form of colour bar discrimination, whether open or disguised, which masquerades behind the name of immigration control. That is why we demand the repeal of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act.

We Have Been Warned

It is not the coloured immigrants that menace Britain, but racialism. History has provided its grim warnings. Racialism in the United States spawned the Ku Klux Klan who murder white progressives as well as Negroes. Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany culminated in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, where Jew and non-Jew perished side by side. Apartheid in South Africa has led to the torture-jails of Johannesburg where African, Indian and European prisoners are submitted to the vilest brutalities by Verwoerd's sadistic police.

The next page (pictured left) goes on to discuss the hierarchy of ethnicities that dominated British thinking towards immigration during the 1960s. The document outlines the disparity in accepted immigration applications from white countries when compared to their non-white counterparts. As the pamphlet suggests, the chance of being accepted from a majority white country was almost double the chance of being accepted from a majority non-white country. Although not official policy, this evidence demonstrates a potent bias that persisted amongst British elites who had cut their teeth during the era of the British Empire. As Afua Hirsch notes, immigration 'has always been a byword for the problem of people who are racialised as undesirable' (2018). British power and identities have derived their authority from being synonymous with whiteness. To use a recent example, some (Hedayat, 2022: *The Guardian*) have contrasted how white Ukrainian refugees have been warmly received in Britain compared to those non-white refugees seeking to leave Afghanistan. This is despite the fact that Britain has been intimately involved in Afghanistan for two decades of conflict and governance.

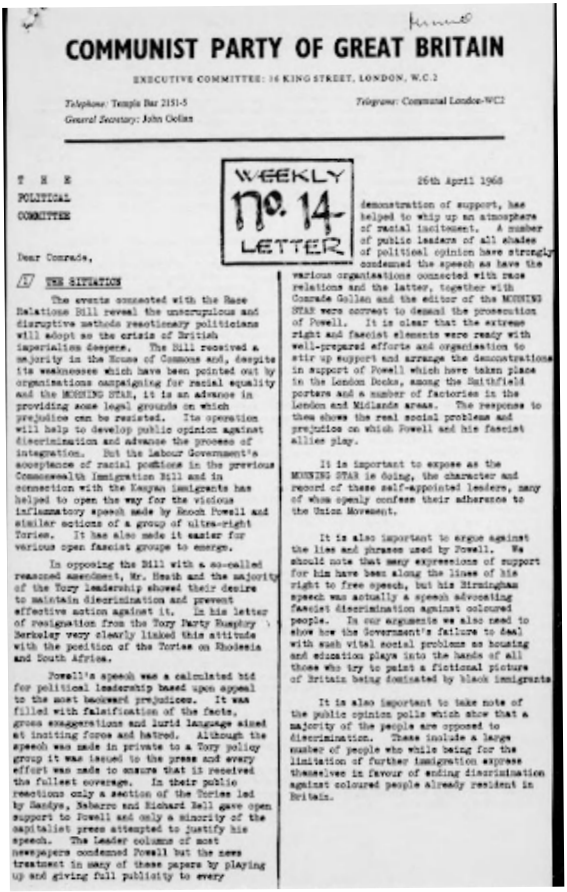
From 'Rivers of Blood' to the ‘Hostile Environment’

Borrowed from British Online Archives’ *Propaganda and Government Information, 1939-2009* collection, the poster to the left, inspired by the Race Relations Act of 1968, was produced in order to encourage social and ethnic harmony in the wake of significant migration to the UK.

1968 was a key year in the debate around immigration to the United Kingdom. The Labour government passed the Race Relations Act, which made discrimination on the basis of race illegal in certain areas of public life. In the debate surrounding the bill, a key flashpoint emerged when Enoch Powell, the Conservative MP for Wolverhampton South West, gave his infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech.

In his much remembered intervention, Powell argued that unchecked migration from the Caribbean would turn Britain into a new America, a country which, he argued, was increasingly dominated by non-white people. Although the speech was more openly hostile than the political establishment was willing to admit to, with newspapers denouncing Powell, and Edward Heath sacking him from the shadow cabinet, polls conducted at the time suggested that a majority of people agreed with the sentiments

of the speech. In many ways, much like the Brexit vote, this speech marked a key moment in which simmering tensions over immigration boiled over and represented another nail in the coffin of the **tenuous** 'Commonwealth discourse' that treated all British subjects as harmonious siblings (Doty, 1996: 247).



COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 16 KING STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

Telephone: Temple Bar 2151-5 *Telegrams:* Communist London-WC2

General Secretary: John Gollan

WEEKLY No. 14 LETTER

26th April 1968

T H E
POLITICAL
COMMITTEE

Dear Comrade,

1. THE SITUATION

The events connected with the Race Relations Bill reveal the unscrupulous and disruptive methods reactionary politicians will adopt as the crisis of British imperialism deepens. The Bill received a majority in the House of Commons and, despite its weaknesses which have been pointed out by organisations campaigning for racial equality and the MORNING STAR, it is an advance in providing some legal grounds on which prejudice can be resisted. Its operation will help to develop public opinion against discrimination and advance the process of integration. But the Labour Government's acceptance of racial positions in the previous Commonwealth Immigration Bill and in connection with the Kenyan immigrants has helped to open the way for the vicious inflammatory speech made by Enoch Powell and similar actions of a group of ultra-right Tories. It has also made it easier for various open fascist groups to emerge.

In opposing the Bill with a so-called reasoned amendment, Mr. Heath and the majority of the Tory leadership showed their desire to maintain discrimination and prevent effective action against it. In his letter of resignation from the Tory Party Humphry Berkeley very clearly linked this attitude with the position of the Tories on Rhodesia and South Africa.

Powell's speech was a calculated bid for political leadership based upon appeal to the most backward prejudices. It was filled with falsification of the facts, gross exaggerations and lurid language aimed at inciting force and hatred. Although the speech was made in private to a Tory policy group it was issued to the press and every effort was made to ensure that it received the fullest coverage. In their public reactions only a section of the Tories led by Sandys, Maudling and Richard Bell gave open support to Powell and only a minority of the capitalist press attempted to justify his speech. The Leader columns of most newspapers condemned Powell but the news treatment in many of these papers by playing up and giving full publicity to every demonstration of support, has helped to whip up an atmosphere of racial incitement. A number of public leaders of all shades of political opinion have strongly condemned the speech as have the various organisations connected with race relations and the latter, together with Comrade Gollan and the editor of the MORNING STAR were correct to demand the prosecution of Powell. It is clear that the extreme right and fascist elements were ready with well-prepared efforts and organisation to stir up support and arrange the demonstrations in support of Powell which have taken place in the London Docks, among the Smithfield porters and a number of factories in the London and Midlands areas. The response to these shows the real social problems and prejudice on which Powell and his fascist allies play.

It is important to expose as the MORNING STAR is doing, the character and record of these self-appointed leaders, many of whom openly confess their adherence to the Union Movement.

It is also important to argue against the lies and phrases used by Powell. We should note that many expressions of support for him have been along the lines of his right to free speech, but his Birmingham speech was actually a speech advocating fascist discrimination against coloured people. In our arguments we also need to show how the Government's failure to deal with such vital social problems as housing and education plays into the hands of all those who try to paint a fictional picture of Britain being dominated by black immigrants.

It is also important to take note of the public opinion polls which show that a majority of the people are opposed to discrimination. These include a large number of people who while being for the limitation of further immigration express themselves in favour of ending discrimination against coloured people already resident in Britain.

The image to the left is a 'Weekly Letter' produced by the Political Committee. The purpose of these Weekly Letters was to allow the CPGB leadership to riff on a range of socio-political developments in the UK and abroad.

As the file above demonstrates, the CPGB joined the chorus of voices condemning the content of the 'Rivers of Blood' speech, accusing Powell of delivering 'a speech advocating fascist discrimination against coloured people'. The Political Committee of the CPGB also addressed the troubling issue of working class support for such sentiments through its reference to the London dockers and midland factory workers who had come out in favour of Powell. It was often a feature of CPGB policy that it had to balance its progressive ideals with the attitudes of the working class people it wanted to join their cause. Interestingly,

it is often noted that these same conservative attitudes towards immigrants pervade working class communities in contemporary Britain. Nevertheless, the policy position taken here remains significant for its unapologetic defence of immigrants in Britain. Since 1965, the CPGB's party line had not changed much, with the Political Committee stating: 'the Government's failure to deal with such vital social problems as housing and education plays into the hands of all those who try to paint a fictional picture of Britain being dominated by black immigrants'. Much like in the previous document, this situates anti-immigrant views within the framework of capitalism, and suggests immigrants are scapegoated because of the establishment's failure to provide ordinary people with a good standard of living.

Despite this promising rhetoric on the part of the CPGB, it is clear that its progressive attitudes to immigration never cut through in the way they were intended. By the late 1960s, the CPGB was becoming increasingly discredited in the eyes of the British public. In 1968, the Party's hardline attitude in support of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia contributed to declining membership figures and exposed the party to accusations that it was a puppet of Moscow. The fact the CPGB had adopted a similar attitude in response to Soviet intervention in Hungary, in 1956, merely compounded the issue. This captures one of the tragedies of the CPGB: for all its progressive rhetoric in the domestic sphere, its reliance on Moscow for funds and political capital largely damaged and undermined its credibility as a reliable and trusted voice on British political issues.

Powell's fiery anti-immigration speech left a long legacy; one which still reverberates today. A widely quoted Gallup poll conducted shortly after his speech suggested that 74% of the public agreed with what he had said (Brown, 2001). On remembering the speech fifty years on, Liberal Democrat MP Vince Cable recalled

how the speech had created an 'ugly climate of racism' (Savage, 2018: *The Guardian*). Some researchers have even suggested his speech significantly contributed to the Conservatives 1970 election victory. The Conservative Party's assumption of power brought with it the Immigration Act of 1971, which ended the right of Commonwealth citizens to settle in Britain permanently (Puzzo, 2003: 73). As Roxanne Doty notes, by 1975 Britain 'had instituted a tightly regulated, racially discriminatory immigration system that involved making distinctions about the desirability of particular nationality and racial groups as immigrants' (1966: 253). The CPGB's worst fears of a 'racialised' immigration policy were realised, and the archival material used here appears more prophetic in the wake of this.

Tragically, the same generation of migrants that felt the fury of Powell and those who scorned non-white migration, also felt the biting animosity of the British 'hostile environment' introduced by Theresa May in the 2010s. This was a government policy aimed at making British society an actively hostile place for "illegal" immigrants and therefore encouraging them to leave voluntarily. Or in other words, the 'hostile environment' was intended 'to weaponise total destitution and rightlessness, so as to force migrants without the right to be in the country to deport themselves' (Webber, 2019: 77). Due to the dilapidated and chaotic nature of the British state in the wake of the Second World War, thousands of 'Windrush' immigrants were never issued paperwork by the Home Office. To add insult to injury, in 2010, the Home Office destroyed landing cards belonging to Windrush migrants (BBC News, 2020), further obscuring the true legality of people's right to be in the UK. This fact, coupled with the emergence of the 'hostile environment' policy, meant that at least hundreds, and probably thousands, of people have been subject to denial of access to public services and even deportation, despite spending their entire adult lives in the UK.

Moreover, by overstating the problem of illegal immigration in the UK, the policy of 'hostile environment' further legitimised the dehumanising discourse against migrants.Jamie Grierson (2018: *The Guardian*) has argued that this policy was a deliberate ploy by the Conservative Party to counter the electoral threat of Nigel Farage's United Kingdom Independence Party, who were making electoral waves with fiery anti-immigration rhetoric.

A Long Hangover

It is remarkable how little Britain's attitude towards immigration has changed in over sixty years. The immigration debate of the 2010s is best viewed through the prism of continuity with the debates of the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than existing in separate vacuums, decades apart, the 1960s and 1970s immigration debates built the foundation for anti-immigration attitudes in present society. Nothing is more symbolic of this continuity than the fate of many of the Windrush generation, who arrived as children and struggled for acceptance, before facing the cold discrimination of the state during Theresa May's 'hostile environment'. During the 1960s and 1970s, the CPGB provided an important voice in the defence of immigrants, making a popular case for accepting immigration. The absence of this organised voice during the 2010s was a great loss for public discourse, and left those immigrants who have contributed so richly to British history vulnerable to toxic discourse and hateful attitudes.

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Fuck
Fianna
Fáil
Fuck
Fine
Gael

Paul Dylan

After months of campaigning,
they changed the name of Passport Express
to Post Passport, reflecting the slower turnaround
times associated with post applications.

- And in departure lounges as
- villa owners and visa holders
- clamour for escape,

thanks are expected.

When asked what's next -
A&E to W8&C.
The homeless will influence decisions,
camps of portacabins behind fences.
But the question on everyone's mind is
will the new postcards
still say
'Greetings from sunny Ireland'?

Or the dead don't speak,
but their bones sing
history,
and the dying
will be heard.

Beside the sea

Joe Conlon

Pa woke up suddenly from a deep sleep. His heart pounded while he tried to catch his breath. Anxious, nervous quivers shook through his body. It took him a few seconds to realise it was just a nightmare.

Laying flat on his back, his eyes closed, inhaling deep breaths, holding them for a few seconds before exhaling, then repeating. Feeling the hard ground beneath the centimetres-thin camping mat he was lying on. Closing his eyes, rubbing his toes off each other, clenching and unclenching his trembling hands. Listening to the sounds of the ocean, the wind blowing, picturing the long strands of lyme grass swaying and dancing in the wind. He could hear the seagulls squawking and the wind rustling the polyester walls of the tent.

After a few minutes the anxiety and trembling receded. He could feel slight pins and needles in his fingers, palms, cheeks, lips, feel his heart rate slowing down.

The morning was when he missed heroin most.

Sitting up cross-legged. It was daylight. Since it was the summer it was hard to tell what time it was. He checked his phone, 9 a.m. His battery was on ten percent. He'd have to find somewhere to charge it up. The library was the usual place for it. It was a grand spot; he could hang around reading papers and books while he waited. No one gave him shit for being there. The food bank was now open and would close by 12 p.m. He'd have to start making a move for it soon.

Being by the sea felt calming. It reminded him of better times. Childhood memories of hot summer days, long days that seemed never to end, hours and hours of fun. Sandy sandwiches, hot

club-orange in flimsy plastic cups, eating 99s and licking the drips before they dribbled down your fingers from the cone. Building sand castles, playing in the rock pools. They were the good auld days. He felt safe there by the sea.

He took out a plastic camping cup and filled it half with water and took out his tooth brush and scrubbed his teeth. Slid his legs into pants and put his shoes on.

He double checked his rucksack, making sure the charger was in the side pocket. Unzipped the tent door and made his way to the train station heading for Dun Laoghaire.

***

Standing in the queue of the food bank, he saw the familiar face of an old friend. Beavis and Pa were childhood mates, got stoned together for the first time together, drinking cans for the first time, first time getting arrested – as youths they were inseparable. Pa was happy to see him, but surprised he was here, handing out food parcels.

‘What's the story Beavis? I haven't seen ya in ages,’ - says Pa while sticking out his hand.

Beavis returns with a firm handshake. ‘What's up bro? My name is Peter now. Beavis is the old me. I'm not that guy no more, well, trying not to be.’

He was nicknamed Beavis on account of his larger-than-usual head size. Frankenstein would have been more fitting since he was also tall, and had a square-shaped head. ‘I'm doing good, man. I’m just out of treatment. I was banged up before that for a while.’

‘Yeah, I heard you got two years.’

‘Yeah, I got clean inside then straight into treatment when I finished

me sentence. I'm volunteering here now for me sins. I'll be able to stick it down on the auld CV as work experience, ya know like?'

'Ya wouldn't done much of tha in a good few years, bro,' Pa says teasingly.

'Ha ha, fuck off, sure you can't talk,' teasing Pa back.

'I've been clean for nearly a year now myself,' says Pa feeling some pride.

'That's cool, pal. I'm really chuffed for ya. Where ya stayin at now?'

'In a tent man.'

Beavis is trying not to show any shock.

'I couldn't be stay in the hostels any longer. There's too much temptation, ya know yourself.'

'Yeah I know what ya mean, they're kips at the best of times. Better off out of them.' Trying to sound reassuring.

'Ya know I'd let you crash at mine, but ya know yourself we aren't good together. I've been clean a good while now and I need to be on the straight-an-narrow. No offence man. I need to be doin it for the daughter.'

'No worries. No, you're dead right. Us stayin together, we'd be back up to mischief in no time. I wouldn't have asked that of ya in any ways. We've been at that shit a long time, since we were kids. We are getting too old for that shite now. It's why I'd rather live in a tent away from people and away from trouble.'

'Tell ya wha,' says Peter, 'call back here this evening at six and I'll fix you up proper.'
'Yeah that be sound.'

‘But sure, take this in the meantime.’ Handing Pa a full shopping bag.

‘Do you want some extra cans of tuna?’

‘No thanks, I'm a vegetarian now.’

‘You’re a wha? A vegetarian?’ Peter blurts out in astonishment.

‘Yeah, jus because I’m down-n-out doesn't mean I'm happy harming and hurting defenceless creatures.’ Half mocking himself, half serious. ‘Do you know the effects of the meat industry on the environment – not to mention your health?’

‘You've always been a mad nerd, man,’ Peter mocked

- ‘I’m tellin ya we are all fucked, bro.’
-
- ‘I agree with you there,’ says Peter, thinking and referring to something else.

‘Im tellin ya, global warming, melting the ice caps. It’s no joke, I read an article a while back. Dublin’s on a list of cities around the world that'll be under water in a few years.’

‘I'll be grand so, tha farm is uphill. All the snobs in Dun Laoghaire will be fucked. Good enough for them. Ah but sure they'll be grand with their yachts, tha cunts.’

Both laughing – ‘But sure. Anyway, ya may as well take these cans. You might bump into someone that'll want them.’

‘Yeah ok, go on then.’ Pa opens the plasting bag for Peter to put the cans in it. ‘Nice one pal, sure I better head on here and let ya serve the others in the queue …Remember Pa, call back at six, yeah?’

'I will indeed, pal. Talk to ya later then.'

Pa heads for the library; it should be open by now.

***

At the library charging his phone, about an hour and a half into reading all the day's newspapers and scanning the Internet, Pa decides to walk through the aisles of bookcases, looking over the shelves, hoping he might come across a new book. In the science fiction section he found a book by J. R. R. Tolkien he hadn't read before. Pa's a massive fan of Tolkien's, and has read many of his novels, and was ecstatic to have found this book.

He loved *The Lord of the Rings* instantly the first time watching part one of the movie. A couple of years later in one of his many stints in rehab he saw a documentary, possibly on one of the BBC channels, about J. R. R. Tolkien and what influenced his storytelling.

Tolkien began writing T*he Lord of the Rings* in the years running up to the start of the Second World War, and finished writing them just after it ended. Growing up in rural England he witnessed the fiery furnaces, the black chimneys, the destruction that industrialism brought to the countryside. All these events no doubt influenced the creation of Middle-earth and the characters that lived there. It's not hard to see the parallels between the real-life events and Tolkien's fictitious world.

Middle-earth is a reference to earth's past before industrialism destroyed the forests, the land, and all those beings that inhabited them. The character Saruman and The Kingdom of Isengard represent the industrial revolution – the cutting down of the forest to be replaced with a war factory pumping out Orcs to attack and colonise Middle-earth. The hobbits are subsistence farmers and the elves are a forest tribe that live in harmony with the natural world, defending it against the industrial warfare of Saruman and his Orcs, who want to destroy rural and forest life to create a new

industrial world. The great war for the Ring is obviously the world wars.

At first Pa didn't see it in that way but related to it when it was explained in the documentary, which brought him a new love for the story. When he got out of rehab he 'borrowed' the trilogy from the library.

He always loved the outdoors as a kid, going on adventures in the fields and woodland that surrounded his estate.

Now the fields are gone – replaced with motorways, apartment blocks, and shops. The old sense of community in the estate disappeared as families bought their council homes and, when property prices rose, sold them on to posh families, who wouldn't have stepped foot in the estate a decade or two previously. The old connections are gone. The corner shop that sold single cigarettes and ten-penny bags is gone; in its place is the same multinational corporation shop found everywhere, identical on the inside, selling the same shite for the same rip-off prices. The old families and people are gone, driven out by the orc-like yuppy colonisers that pillaged the estate destroying its social fabric.

***

Pa calls back to the food bank at six. Peter brings him inside to the store rooms to pick out a few bits.

Peter grabs a sleeping bag, some packs of socks and jocks, puts them in a bag for Pa. Pa spots a book on foraging native Irish plants on a large stack of donated books.

'Nice one Peter for sorting me out here.'

'Don't mention it, Pa. Are you stuck for a few quid?'
'Nah, I'm grand man.'

Peter reaches into his pocket, taking out €20 and handing it to him.

Pa puts out his hands, refusing the money.

'Go on … take it.'

Reluctantly, he takes it. 'nice one pal, I really appreciate it.'

'No worries, come back now next Wednesday at the same time I'll sort you out with more stuff. Different bits and pieces come in each week; there's always something different. Take that with you too.'

'Yeah will do. Thanks again, bro. I appreciate it.'

'Take it easy, Pa,' says Peter.

Pa throws his rucksack over his shoulders and walks off up the street with a food parcel in one hand and a sleeping bag slung over a shoulder, fumbling with the €20 in his pocket while contemplating scoring. Nah, he thinks, attempting to shake the thoughts of heroin from his mind. He'd treat himself to a nice takeaway instead. He couldn't remember the last time he'd had one.

He'll try out the new vegan place he'd heard about that opened on Lower George's Street, beside Bloomfields.

***

Opening the door he walks up to the counter examining the menu behind the till.

'I'll have a falafel there, pal, and a can of coke.'

'That'll be €14, please.'
Pa smiles to himself imagining what Beavis, no Peter, would say knowing he is spending the money on a falafel of all things.

Pa sits down at a table right beside the counter, placing his rucksack on the opposite seat and the sleeping bag on the table.

He notices a bunch of young student types huddled around down the end, some looking over their shoulders right at him then turning back to talk to each other.

Who da fuck are these posh cunts eyeballin – thinking to himself. Feeling embarrassed and totally self-conscious, he bends over to his rucksack and takes out the book he got earlier. Hoping the book would camouflage him or turn him invisible.

***

After getting his takeaway, Pa headed for Tesco to fill his flask up with hot water for making cups of tea this evening. Walking through the automatic doors he saw the shop assistant behind the till who was usually on. She spotted him and smiled.

'How-a-ya? Is it OK to fill me flask up?'

'Yeah, sure, go ahead.'

At the coffee dock he took the metal flask out and placed it on the counter, then bent down to set his rucksack on the ground between his feet.

Standing back up, he was startled by the manager who was suddenly standing right beside him. Where the fuck did he appear out of?

The Tesco manager had weasel-like features (and personality to match), gelled hair (more than likely in the same style since he was a teenager), a thin pointed nose with glasses perched on, pinhole darting eyes, near goofy teeth (but not quite), wearing a shirt that was several sizes too big, (he looked like a kid in adult clothes).

Pa wondered how the hell was he able to creep up on him without noticing.

'Can I help you?' says the weasel.

'Nah, you're grand mate, I'm just filling me flask up.'

'No you can't. The hot water is for teas and coffees only.'

'I just want a bit of hot water.'

'Buy yourself a tea or coffee,' the weasel says.

Pa notices a security guard standing at a distance, watching, not even trying to hide the fact.
'The water is for ***p-a-y-ing*** customers.' his face with a matter-of-fact expression.

'Ya know wha?! Fuck you, yer tea, and yer fuckin coffee.'

'Get out of here or I'll call the guards.'

'Go ahead and call the fuckin garda, ya dope ya.'

Pa, squinting with anger, eyeing him up and down.

'Ah, what's the matter, did they not let ya in? Even they wouldn't have ya.'

The weasels facial features change with anger as he violently blurts out, 'Get out of this shop now you smelly fucking junky.'

Pa replies calmly, 'Am I even real to you? Am I a person? Can you see me, or am I a mirage, a figment of your imagination? You may not recognize me, but I recognise you. We lived on the same road when you were a kid. I know your Ma and Da. You's were just blow-

ins.

You were a fuckin weasel as a kid and you've grown up into a fuckin right little weasel. I liked your Ma, your Da was prick though, just like you. Thinkin he was better than the rest of us, for wha? Because he bought his gaff?'

Pa raised his arm, extended his index finger and poked the weasel in the chest.

'You are just an uppity little cunt in a uniform. I hope your Ma is ashamed of ya, because she should be. I'm sick of people like you, lookin down your nose at people, thinkin your better. Keep your fuckin hot water, ye can stick it up yer fuckin hole.'

Pa stuffed the flask back into the rucksack and headed for the door. In any other walk of life the weasel wouldn't get away with it, but here he was the boss, ruling the roost, thinking he was the shit. Or so he thought anyway. The lord of the shop. Pa thought to himself leaving and heading for the train station.

***

The evening sun was beaming down, clear blue skies, no breeze. His stomach was rumbling, walking through the long grass. He could see his tent. He couldn't wait to get back and munch on the falafel. He put his backpack down and opened the tent door and crawled in, then reemerged with a plastic bowl, taking one of the cans of tuna out of the rucksack and emptying it into the bowl. Then he walked the few feet to the sand dune to place the bowl at the start of a trail before returning to his tent. He sat at the door of the tent cross-legged, placing the takeaway bag on his lap, and carefully opened the paper wrapper on the falafel and the can of coke. Rubbing his hands together, now it was time, he was ready to dig into his feast.

Raising the falafel to his mouth, taking a big bite, savouring the flavours that were exploding on his palate, then taking a gulp of

coke before having a second bite.

Two swallows came swooping down, darting around the dunes, back up into the air, and down again, racing around the trees and bushes. Pa heard motion at the dunes and immediately saw a fox eating the tuna, then a second fox appeared, a baby.

He ate his falafel watching the foxes munch on their grub, while the sun began its descent and the sound of the sea in the near distance and the long grass swayed in the evening breeze. He couldn't help but smile.

Life isn't all bad, he thought. He definitely preferred his solitude. Why was there so many arseholes in the world? Life was full of them.

***

The sun was beginning to go down, it would be dark soon, maybe in an hour or two. Pa decided to try his hand at foraging while there was still daylight. Taking the book from his rucksack he took off through the tall grass and dunes to see what he could find.

Flicking through the pages as he walked along he noticed a few plants and flowers he recognised but had never known the names of. He didn’t have a clue that so many plants had uses and were edible. He was always told they were just weeds.

Walking on a trail behind the sand dunes he noticed a clump of tall plants sticking out, standing maybe four foot in height with pinkish purplish bell-shaped flowers in clusters, running down the base with large green leaves sticking out from the bottom. Bees buzzing around the flowers then entering, crawling up the bells for the pollen. Thinking the plant looked familiar he scanned through the book till he found a plant that looked like it. Foxglove, poisonous, non-edible, medicinal to treat heart problems. Jaysus I better not be trying those, so.

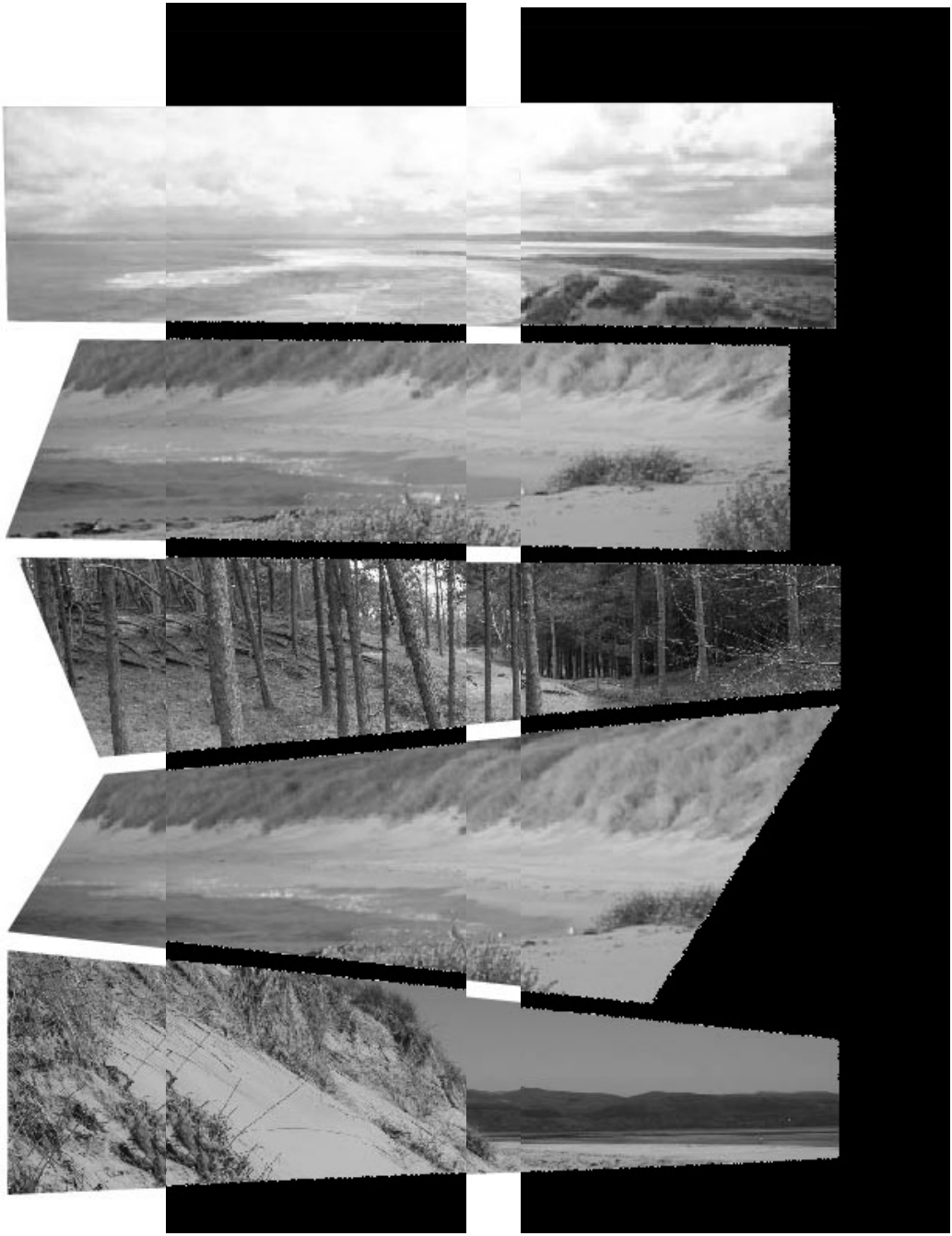
Moving a few more feet up the trail he sees more plants but this time he recognises them. Stingers I know that one. Flicks through the book; nettles, edible. Yeah I knew that, didn't the vikings used to eat them in soup? But not knowing where he got this information from – perhaps from his nanny when he was a kid? – he couldn't quite remember. He kept walking along the trail, going down a short sandy slope into a small clearing of long grass.

The summer symphony of bees humming and grasshoppers singing, butterflies floating and fluttering through the long grass, and the wild flowers that tangled among it, as if they were being blown about by small gusts of wind, were enticing sensory stimulation as Pa walked through the miniature meadow.

At the far end he spotted bramble bushes – no berries, not in season till autumn, said the book. He knew this though.

After walking about a mile up the trail that snaked in and out of the sand dunes he turned around to view his surroundings. The daylight had been dulled; it was still fairly warm, groups of kids and adults were splashing and swimming in the calm, flat, motionless sea, taking as much advantage as possible of the last few remaining moments of the dying day. Seagulls flew in the distance, swooping into the sea like darts in attempts to catch a meal; families and lone individuals lay on the beach sunbathing and finishing off the remainder of their picnics.

Far off in distance Pa sees the Dublin mountains very clearly as the sun sets behind them. I must take a trip over there one of these days, Pa thinks to himself. I'll bring me tent, maybe stay up there for a bit. Yeah, that would be nice.



A Bike, the Smell of Violets, Room to Grow and Crabs

I first learned to ride a bike when I was (roughly) seven years old. We were on one of our cobbled together camping holidays at the seaside (this particular time, at Wells-next-the-Sea). You might know the sort of holiday I mean—overcrowded tent smelling of five secreting bodies, farts, and grass;

campsite showertrays haunted by somebody else's pubic hair; powdered milk; own-brand Smash;

- impossible-to-clean mess tins welded with Bacon
- Grill; clothes spilling out from carrier bags; cheap
- Swiss Rolls; and stinky boiled egg sandwiches seasoned with sand. Your wishful thoughts were directed toward

the ice-cream van. You pined for donkeys, tucked your dress into your knickers to paddle, followed an energetic dog on a piece of string. Your parents hkrowing to fuck. That kind of holiday. Not neat hotels or prim guest houses called something twee—*Forget-me-not Glades*, *Honey-Pot Heights* or *Rambling Rose Mede*, maybe—where the proprietors used Shake n'Vac, had genuine Lladró and would shit a brick to see our shambles coming up the drive. My first bike was bought by my dad from a junk shop, somewhere nearby, on this holiday. It was red (a little rusty) and had these beautiful,

big wheels. We didn't get stabilisers in our family— there was no natural progression from scoot-alongs, to assorted miniature bikes with dinky shopping baskets fixed to tasselled handlebars (though how I wanted one!) You got a functional bike that was way too big for you— the mount / dismount of which was an inelegant,

dangerously tilted, almost-falling on / off business. You got everything too big for you. The coat / skirt / school jumper / shoes with 'room to grow'. Like those rubber riding boots that by some miracle, you were eventually able to have after years of scrambling onto ponies in assorted flip-flops / bare feet / wellies / pumps.

The trip to the saddlery had me so excited I could barely breathe. Imagine my horror when the only pair I was allowed (because they were on sale) were a size eight. There's nothing wrong with that size— only problem is, I was still at primary school and now, at fifty years old, I am still not a size eight. I cried my eyes out.

But those were the ones I had to have. I spent years flapping around like a penguin. The soles fell off, long before I ever stood a chance of growing into them. It's an odd thing, never being allowed anything for the right now—everything bought for a sometime-in-the-future you, a different-shaped you, a you with different

requirements altogether. Small wonder then, that I have never known who I am, or what I am really meant to resemble. I spent my childhood looking like

some sad clown. How do you ever work out what or
where you fit? I never grew into these things, same as
I never really grew into my life.

I was talking about my first bike and how I learned to
ride that holiday, on a quiet street in
Wells-next-the-Sea. Three things have remained in
my head from this time—one, that red bike; two, seeing hermit
crabs for the first time (I thought they
were actual, honest-to-God miracles). My brothers
and me

watched those little crabs for hours. Watched them
bunch like tiny red fists at each shell's aperture, the
soft of them kept to a private apex. We watched
them unfold from their doorways, the same as we
seemed to—uncertain, fearful, shame hanging out
like shirt tails, guessing ahead for evil. I wanted to
take some home

but there just wasn't enough sea in our house to
sustain them. So, after the red bike and the crabs,
number three—being bought some *Devon Violets*
perfume in a tiny glass bottle the shape of a cottage
(popular in the 1970s, so I believe). It was ever so
small—just a mouse's glass worth of scent.

My tiny cottage souvenir of
Wells-next-the-Sea—made from glass /

world of attar / fluid flowers / my tiny cottage
/ chosen bring-home thing /finger-dotting scent
behind my cockle ears / the smell of violets is not

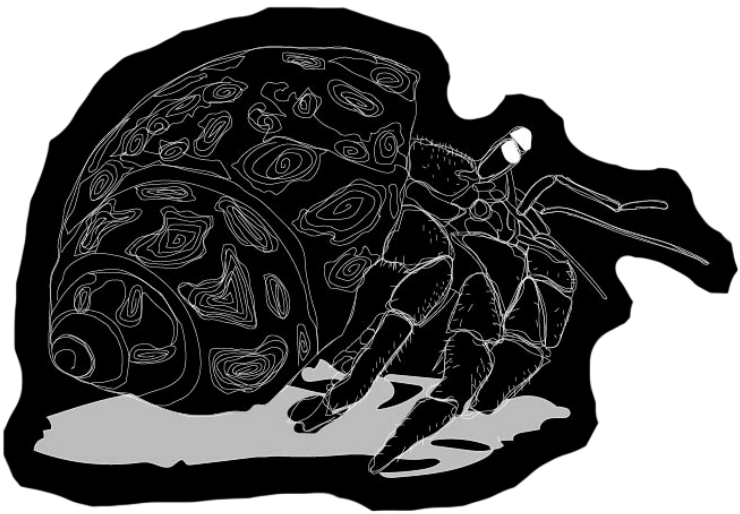
the smell of the sea / not the smell of my mother /
not the smell of sand / I put the smell of violets on
my seven-year-old skin /

my tiny cottage made from glass / has a door
moulded shut / windows crystal-harsh / my chosen
cottage bring-back thing / is not my real home /

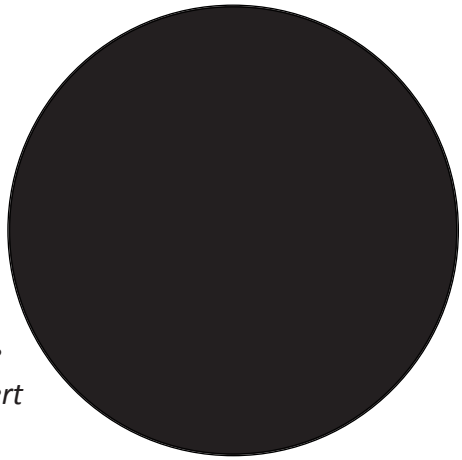
I did not want a bucket or a hat / I did not want
a proper seaside toy / finger-dotting scent upon
my young throat / my cottage / painted roses climb

the lucent wall /the smell of violets left a garden
in the air / I wore it and watched /my toes pock
the wet beach / crabs appear from hermit shells /

I rode a red bike / the smell of violets / tried
to make me beautiful / a cottage made from glass /
small upon my chubby palm



Landed Power Anon



From people who lived on the HS2 campaign and in Calvert Nature Reserve

I'm sat in a bird hide, looking out over the water at Calvert Jubilee Nature Reserve. A sanctuary the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, stewards of this land, describe as 'one of the jewels in the crown of our nature reserves'.

Watching the water fowl take off and land and the dragonflies lay their eggs on the shimmering surface, I'm at peace, almost. Just behind the treeline, HS2 contractors are ready and waiting to bring more destruction for an access road to the trainline.

This land is part of the 8% the public legally has access to in England. The land just the other side of the boundary from here is privately owned. Such a pathetic amount is afforded us by the 'right to roam' – just 6% is 'open access', where you are not required to stick to the thin, tendril-like rights of way.

I am of this land, just as much as you are, wherever your place of birth or residence, whatever your ancestry or financial status. We may be different in that I was born in the countryside and have roamed my whole life, with scant regard for fences, walls and the erroneous 'Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted' signs that litter the way.

This land is the very foundation of our health and existence. Being in nature improves the immune system, lowers blood pressure, and reduces stress. We are told time and again to lead more active, healthier lives, yet the most fundamental way of doing so is continually being taken from us.

For a millennium or more our right to the land has been stolen in fits, starts, and landslides.

The Norman Conquest took land and redefined subsistence hunting by poor folk as poaching. Centuries of enclosure and clearance. Repossessions that fueled the machines of war and capital. The privatisations of Thatcher's tyranny. Just the faintest lip service to a long and complex history of fuckery.

Today, it takes the form of changes to planning regulations in favour of the capitalist economy. The HS2 hybrid bills allow the government, the HS2 exec, and their contractors to take whatever land they like, through compulsory purchase and temporary possession orders, and do with it as they please.

Their plan is to disregard existing environmental and social protections, to damage and destroy 108 ancient woodlands, 33 sites of special interest, 693 local wildlife Sites and 21 local nature reserves, such as this one. I've even heard of lakes in Rugby and Kent that will be filled with the spoil from the tunnelling operations. These places provide so much for those who visit, yet their well-used rights of way will be closed with no notice, diversion, or apology.

So I offer no apology for my scant regard, my disdain for the owning classes whining of infringements upon their right to property. Those who are, and have always been, protected and elevated by the laws of this land.

The true law of the land is the connection – interconnection – of *all* things that are of the land.

The centuries-long work of obscuring and then severing this connection continues. This is the work of convincing us that nature is not ours, that to get our fix we need to spend money from the back of a boat or 4×4, through the ticket gates of zoos, via the crystalline pixels of screens. And not to stop wherever you're at and notice the weeds opening cracks in concrete, the birds roaming where they will, the breath in your lungs, the sheer tenacity of life this land yearns to support.

So they continue.

Parliament will soon debate whether to make trespass a criminal, rather than a civil, matter – an agenda pushed by this Tory government – yet more discouragement to those who already feel disconnected and unwelcome.

This vicious attack on our liberties is being framed as a way to manage the Travelling communities, those who have more claim than most to being of the land, yet who don't go a day without being persecuted. Even police institutions have declared it unnecessary and counterproductive.

Yet it touches all of us – even the middle-class rambler, who, in misreading a map and wandering off the beaten path, will hold much more fear of being chased by those who claim to protect and serve them.

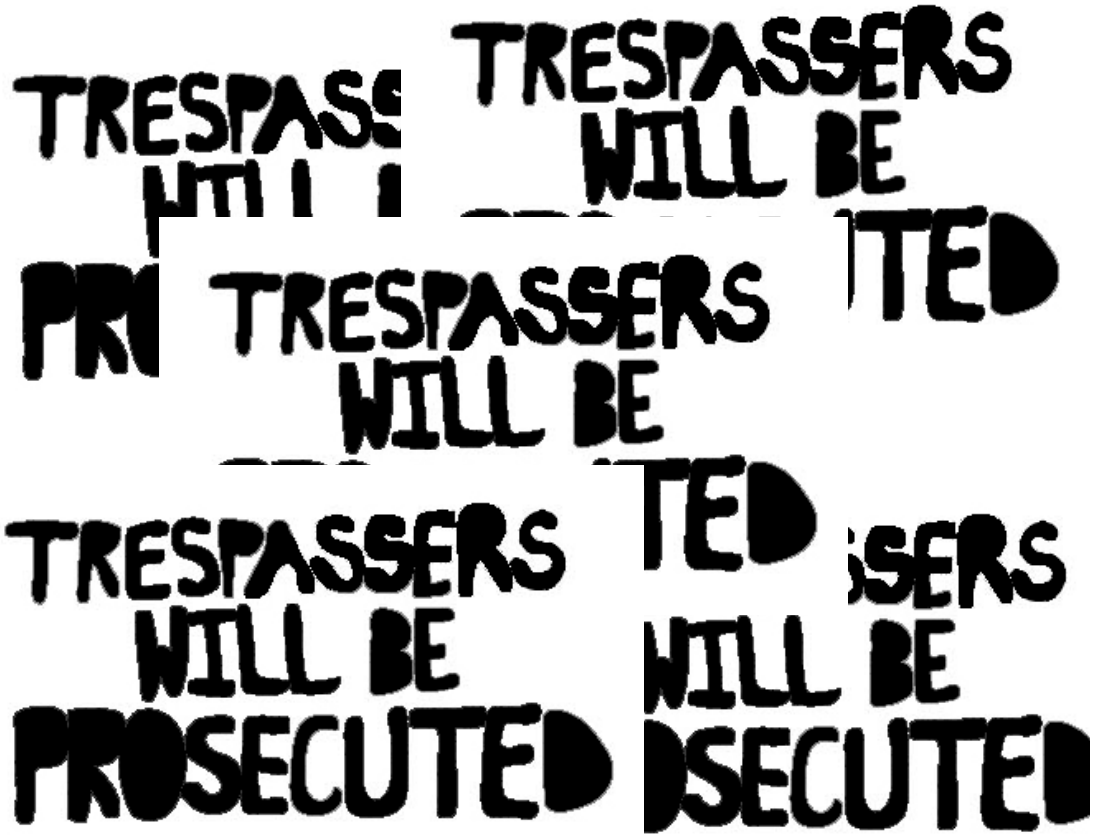
More affected still are people of colour, who are already four times less likely than white people to have access to the countryside. No wonder. The obscene wealth of land hidden behind the walls of stately homes and country estates is part of the fabric of imperialist

colonialism, monuments to white supremacy, land reserved for the oppressors of race and class.

And so we see this affront to our right to have our voices heard, to hold the state to account. The right to protest, to occupy land as an act of resistance. An affront to free-range people living on the land, who see injustice and can't turn a blind eye, in places like this nature reserve, a large swathe of which will be cleared for a trainline access road, which the vast majority of people don't know about, don't want and certainly won't benefit from.

Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted.

Land is power. So you'll have none.



October 2019

Land Food and the Working Class

Bonnie VandeSteeg

The information in this article is based on the People's Land Policy seminar series: 'Land and Food: Social Justice and Ecological Responsibility' and subsequent reports. However, the way the information is used and the conclusions drawn are the author's and not necessarily those of the People's Land Policy or the speakers who took part in the seminar series.

The working class, which includes the vast majority of the population, need to sell their labour to survive. The fact that land and all of the world's resources are in the hands of the few mean that even essentials such as food are out of reach of many people. One of the first things workers did in the Spanish Revolution was to take over land and organise food production and distribution. In our current society, we are dependent on privately owned farms which grow food for sale, usually to the big supermarket chains. Very few people grow food for themselves. A working-class revolution will need to transform this system, taking over the land and growing food for need and not for profit, and ensuring that food is distributed freely to all.

We do not need to wait until the revolution to begin the process of transformation of the food system. During the pandemic, more and more people realised that depending on the supermarkets for food is expensive and unnecessary. Many have taken direct action, setting up their own food growing and distribution networks. Action for food justice will necessarily mean land justice: without land we cannot grow food.

According to the People's Land Policy in their report from the seminar series:

'The food system in the UK has a number of fundamental problems. Land reform is necessary to deal with these issues because currently decisions about what food is produced and for whom are based on the private decisions of those who own the land within the context of vested interests and impersonal market forces. These decisions are supported by government agriculture and trade policy with food treated as a commodity rather than an essential human need.

'Instead, decisions about how land is used should facilitate a food system that meets the needs of both people and the environment and in which food is a public good. Access to good quality, healthy, culturally appropriate food should be a right, not a source of profit for a few. These decisions should be made collectively, with full participation of both growers and eaters.

'This food system should be based on the principles of **agroecological farming** (*see box for information*) which aim to enhance the resilience of communities and protect and restore ecosystems. Instead of seeing farming as distinct from other land-based activities, we need to redefine the role of all land workers, using the term land stewardship and land stewards.'

Agroecological Principle:

Agroecology is the idea that farming practices, and the environment in which it takes place, should be managed to mimic the functioning of local ecosystems. The expectation is that agroecological practices, like their natural models, can be productive, pest-resistant, and conservative of nutrients, with a minimum dependency on additional chemicals and energy. In doing so, agroecological systems promote recycling, ecological efficiency, and environmental protection.

- Agroecology has its roots in ecology, applying the understanding of natural ecosystems as an alternative to industrialised agriculture. The principles of agroecology include:
- Networks: Reinforcing nature as a network of living systems that are interconnected
- Cycles: Reducing waste by encouraging natural cycles of growth and regeneration
- Partnership: Promoting cooperative systems of energy and resources to create stability
- Diversity: Deriving stability and resilience through the richness of ecosystems
- Dynamic Balance: Ensuring agroecosystems are flexible and with capacity to respond to change
- To read more go to: www.agroeco.org

What is wrong with capitalist agriculture?

Food is grown for profit, not need.

Capitalism is based on the operation of impersonal market forces. This means that those who own the means of production, in this case farmers, produce what they can sell on the market, which, in this case, is dominated by large supermarkets. The supermarkets'

aims are also to make a profit so they will buy what they think they can sell, which is based on eaters' ability to pay, not on what they need. Growing food is very labour intensive. Smaller agroecological farmers who rely largely on their own labour and have high standards of food and animal welfare, struggle to keep costs down. This means their prices tend to be higher and they are not able to enter the mass market. Box schemes tend to be for the middle classes as are many farmers' markets such as Borough Market in London. Large agribusinesses benefit from economies of scale, employing low-paid workers, intensifying production with machinery, and using pesticides. They are therefore able to make more money and keep prices relatively low. However, this food from intensive, pesticide-ridden agriculture is not optimally nutritious and is often based on blatant animal cruelty.

Though there is substantial government intervention in food production through the subsidy and tax-break system, this is designed to work within the market system. But because prices paid to farmers are low, the government steps in to ensure farming incomes. Prior to Brexit, the larger the farm the greater the subsidy, and smaller farms, often horticultural, were not eligible. This is set to change with Brexit.

Social injustice

The fact that farming is dominated by large agribusinesses has created a centralised and unequal system. Large farmers and agribusinesses make huge profits, taking the lion's share of government subsidies and tax breaks. Farmland is being bought up by investors as a way of avoiding inheritance tax, further exacerbating land inequality. It is very difficult for new working-class entrants into farming, and the spread of agroecological farms is very limited. Small-scale farmers are marginalised and rapidly going under, to the benefit of the larger landholdings and

contributing to the decline of rural communities. Land-based workers, often migrants, are very low-paid with insecure and poor working conditions. High rural housing costs make matters worse. In addition, people still go hungry. The supermarkets use their monopoly position to put prices up well above what they actually pay to growers. Eaters end up buying what appears to be cheap food, but is actually very costly in terms of the environment and labour exploitation.

The food system has a negative impact on the environment

Worldwide the majority of agricultural land is used directly or indirectly for meat. (1) In the UK, agriculture takes up 70% of agricultural land. And of that, the majority is for animal products. 'The land footprint used to produce the UK food supply is made up by 62.7% grasslands for animal agriculture, 21.8% for cropland grown for animal feed and 15.5% for crops grown for direct human consumption.' (2)

The predominance of livestock in agriculture is thought to have a number of negative effects on the environment. Livestock is one of the producers of greenhouse gases, and by its taking up so much land we cannot progress with reforestation and rewilding. In addition, techniques of production most commonly used lead to soil degradation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity. This does not mean that livestock farming should be eliminated, but rather industrial livestock production needs to be reduced and small-scale, agroecological expanded. For example, there are many cases of livestock being used for grazing which actually enhances habitats. Needless to say, there is considerable debate among farmers as to the extent of the negative impact such changes might have on livelihoods.

The way food is excessively processed also has a negative

environmental impact. The food industry 'adds value' (exchange value) by processing food as much as possible. The more a food item is processed, the more value is added by the labour input at each processing stage. So a supermarket muffin typically takes many more processes to produce than one you'd make in your kitchen. And each stage increases the number of lower quality ingredients used, uses earth resources, and adds waste.

We are too dependent on an international market

The current food system is tied into an international market, exporting and importing according to what creates the most profit. This means that the UK agricultural system is unable to provide the food needed by the UK population. We produce less than 60% of what we consume. We depend on imports to feed ourselves, and farmers depend on exports to make a living. According to the Land Workers Alliance: 'This is unnecessary as most of the UK's imported food products are also products we export. We import the vast majority of these products from northern European countries with similar climates to our own'. (3)

The meat produced is not only for domestic consumption. Many farmers rely on the export market. In addition, the UK also imports meat (4.)

Only 23% of the fruit and veg we consume is grown on UK farms. Looked at separately, we grow just over 50% of our veg and just over 15% of our fruit. (5)

Though we cannot expect to be completely autonomous, the degree of our dependency on exports and imports needs to be reduced. Being more self-reliant is important for a number of reasons: our own food security (shown in times of crisis like the pandemic), for farmers' livelihoods, to ensure we are not undermining efforts for food justice elsewhere, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

What changes need to be made?

Looking at the food system is a lens through which we can see basic systemic issues present in our society. Speakers at the People's Land Policy seminars referred continually to the need to make systematic changes, though many contributors were reluctant to use the term capitalism. Some speakers, especially when looking at agriculture in the Global South, stressed the need to decolonialise the way we produce food. In the time of the British Empire, the plantation system was widely introduced in the colonies, growing such products as sugar, tobacco, and tea. It could be argued that this intensive agricultural system, based on slave labour, was then introduced from there to the UK. However, it is not enough to decolonialise: it could lead to a simple change of who is in power leaving social class divisions still in place. Though capitalism has been infused with colonialism, the working class needs to overthrow capitalism and create a class-less society if we are to transform the food system. However, keeping in mind our ultimate goal, we can begin to make inroads as part of the process of building up the necessary revolutionary movement.

Ideas for a manifesto

The People's Land Policy has gathered together some of the key ideas for change that people could mobilise around. No change will come about that is not supported by a strong mass movement. These are in draft form at the moment and are meant to be points for discussion rather than definitive ideas. They have had feedback and will be using this to update their discourse and to encourage more discussion. What underpins all of the ideas is the aims for both ecological responsibility and social justice. This means that we need to ensure that working-class people, all those without land and resources, are central to the change process. One question to think about is to what extent small farmers are part of the working

class. They are normally excluded despite their low income. The Land Workers Alliance includes all land-based workers, whether they own a small farm, are tenants, or are workers on a farm. This is an area for discussion. However, the main point is that the aim of transforming the food system is to make it possible for working-class people to have access to good quality nutritious food, as well as be involved in well-paid land stewardship or food-related employment, whether in the countryside or urban areas.

The ideas are grouped according to the following overarching vision that emerged from the seminar series.

1. Create food justice for both land stewards and consumers: lower prices and more equitable incomes for all. Bring producers and consumers closer together, reducing the supply chains and creating more community involvement in food. Reduce the dependency on the market and develop more direct relations between growers and eaters.

- Food prices need to go down and land stewards' incomes up. This can only be done when food is not subject to market forces but is provided at a heavily subsidised price with a guaranteed income for land stewards. There are a number of ways this could be done: subsidising prices to consumers, and paying land stewards directly (already done to a large extent) so that their income is not dependent on what they sell.
- All land stewards would be relatively equal in terms of income. However, currently there are many workers, including migrants, who are paid very low wages to work at key times. If it is necessary to bring workers in then they must be paid a reasonable wage with good working conditions. They should have the right to be in a union.
- Changing the nature of food distribution so that there is

more space for social enterprises with less focus on profit and shareholders. They could be owned cooperatively by the land stewards themselves or by a community. An intermediate step would be to have public procurement policies which buy directly from local producers.

- Create food hubs around the UK, thus decentralising the agricultural system so that food is processed and distributed nearer the point of production. These hubs would be where farmers brought their produce, with different sections for different types of agricultural products. This could include small abattoirs. The aim would be to have a food hub for all products in as many areas as possible, depending on what is practical. These hubs would be cooperatively owned and non-profit making. They could also be a place where training and education took place, both for those interested in working on the land and for those in the wider community who want to become more aware of how the food system works and/or learn more about different foods and how to cook healthy meals.
- These hubs could also be in urban areas, the place where community farms and other growing projects could bring their produce for distribution. These places would be community spaces and provide a number of services and activities as well as a place where growers and eaters can come together to discuss food issues, such as the importance of culturally appropriate food, and how to organise mutual aid for those struggling.
- The increase in the number of land stewards, either as individuals, families, or cooperatives will lead to a repopulation of the rural areas and the urban fringes. Investment will be needed to provide the infrastructure and to help people make the transition.
- These measures will require investm ent in food infrastructure in order to ensure that food

produced here will be able to be sold here affordably for shoppers and profitably for producers, processors, distributors, and retailers.

2. **Make agroecological farming the dominant system and integrate ecological restoration and environmental objectives into land management.**

- The Environment Land Management scheme and the farm payment system for public goods should also be for managing the land and producing food according to agroecological principles.
- Education, training, and support systems need to be in place to support land stewards who are transitioning to agroecological farming.
- Farming practices that damage the environment and/or are inhumane should be penalised through the tax and subsidy system.

3. Reduce the land used for agriculture, especially that which is focused on livestock, and extend land use for afforestation (agroforestry) and biodiversity

- A land-use strategy commission needs to consider how much land we need to divert to environmental objectives such as forestation and rewilding. Once general targets have been set, then the process should be decentralised, with areas working out to what extent it is possible to transfer farmland to environmental uses as well as other uses such as housing. Every area should have a land management plan. It may be that some areas will be able to do more than others, especially those areas which are devoted to arable crops to feed livestock.

- The new Environmental Land Management scheme, especially the Landscape Recovery component, will have a role to play in supporting land stewards in the transition from farming to environmental outcomes.
- Local support networks for the Landscape Recovery need to be put in place, bringing together a range of land stewards.
- Reforestation, essential for halting climate change, can also be an alternative source of income for land stewards.

4. Create food sovereignty/autonomy so that the UK is largely self-reliant in food production

- Break with the current trading system in which food is a commodity and establish a new system based on sovereignty/autonomy, not just in the UK but globally. Aim to produce locally but accept that international trade will be needed. This trade should not contribute to injustice and inequality in other parts of the world. The Land Workers Alliance estimates that 80% of our domestic food consumption could be produced locally and agroecologically and only 20% would need to be imported.
- Stop exports of live animals and other animal products. This is not only inhumane but the land used for this is not contributing to feeding people in the UK nor is it supporting food sovereignty in other countries. There are alternatives to generating incomes for land stewards.
- Stop imports of meat products from other countries. Given the amount of land devoted to raising livestock, the UK should be able to provide enough meat for the population, especially as meat eating is declining and needs to decline both for environmental reasons and for health. It also encourages livestock raising in other countries, which could cause similar problems to those in the UK if the land were used to raise livestock to such an extent.
- Increase the amount of horticulture to reduce dependency

on imports and produce the healthy food we need. If we reduce the amount of land used for livestock, indirectly or directly, then more land will become available to grow grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruit directly for human consumption. A commission consisting of arable and horticulture land stewards could be set up to investigate what kind of crops the UK land could produce.

- Subsidies for locally grown produce and limits on the amount that is imported and gradually phase out imports for produce that we can produce in the UK.
- Financial and logistic support for transition to agroecological farming.

5. Increase access to land for agroecological land stewards so more people can enter agriculture, increasing participation, creating jobs, and revitalising the rural economy and culture

- Map out land ownership and use, in both rural and urban areas, in order to identify land that could be opened up to new entrants or to anyone interested in doing land work. What is considered as possible sites would depend on the land use strategy. Some land uses will be identified as not contributing to the public good and will be phased out.
- Create a public land trust to hold all land that can be leased out on a long-term basis for a variety of public goods, including food growing, agroforestry, and environment, as well as other needs such as housing. This could be decentralised so there are regional or community land trusts. This land could be leased to individual families or to land co-ops.
- Use country farms as another form of public land ownership that could be leased to new entrants.
- Make it possible for land trusts to compulsorily purchase

land that is underused or used for purposes that go against the general land use strategy, e.g. industrial farming of livestock crops, golf courses, investor-oriented housing developments.
- Cap the amount of land anyone can own, adding this land to the land stock of the public land trust, which can then be leased out to new land stewards.
- Provide the necessary training for new entrants with a national land steward college.
- Ensure that appropriate housing is available near rural farms.
- Reduce the price of land so that these policies will be easier to implement. Such policies are already part of the People's Land Policy because they are central to making it possible to achieve public and community control and ownership of land. These include: land value or property tax, abolishing the tax-avoidance loopholes in inheriting agricultural land, and in general reducing the speculative value of land.

6. Ensure that the UK's food system supports, enhances, and learns from the global food justice movement

For this aim we support the vision and policy demands put forward by the Land Workers Alliance in

A Vision for Positive Trade: Building global food sovereignty through trade of food and agricultural products (6)

- International trade should be based on fair trade principles: well-paid labour, no environmental harm, doesn't undermine the autonomy of local communities to feed themselves, and provides an income direct to growers rather than to agro-corporations. Food should be exported only when it is ecologically and socially beneficial to do so.
- Trade rules for a sustainable economy, not free trade. Various tax, quota, and other measures could be used to ensure that

what we import complies with our aims of more self-sufficiency, high quality food, animal welfare standards, and support for agroecological farming here and abroad.

- Supporting global food sovereignty must be a unified aim across foreign investment, development funds, trade policy, and our role within international institutions.
- Decolonialise the UK's role in food production in the Global South. This would include: returning land to democratically-controlled local communities, control on the actions of agro-corporations (wages and treatment of workers, environmental degradation, kinds of food being produced), and taking food products out of the commodities market.
- With 70% of the world's food produced by small-scale farmers in the Global South, we need to consider what we can learn from their successes.

Conclusion

Many in the movement for food and land justice are well aware of the role capitalism plays in the food system and that the vision they hold is not realisable without revolutionary change around the world. This of course will not be an easy task given the forces lined up against us. However, an increasing number of working-class people are getting involved in the alternative food movement, both in rural and urban areas. The Ecological Land Co-op has helped hundreds of new entrants to farming by buying up land and giving it to tenant farmers on very long leases. The Land Workers Alliance has more and more members and the Oxford Real Farming Conference gets bigger every year, attracting a more diverse range of growers, both from the UK and around the world. The pandemic saw many setting up growing initiatives, including guerrilla gardening and alternative distribution networks. People also continue to fight to preserve local markets that are often targeted for development. If all these people came together it would be a very strong movement indeed.

However, we cannot forget that other aspects of struggle are also important. Many of these relate to land, for example, environmental-climate change; biodiversity; reforestation and the protection of wild land; support for communities around the world threatened by mining and other resource extraction, such as logging and palm oil plantations; fights to keep and extend green spaces and community resources in the city for social and mental health benefits; campaigns for truly affordable housing and against estate demolition. Other struggles, equally important, take place in the workplace, around wages, working conditions, and general exploitation. Struggles against oppression are also a vital part of a revolutionary movement such as Black Lives Matter; gender equality at work; more public, free facilities for childcare; and against all forms of discrimination.

Food is an issue that has much potential to build links with other struggles. The food industry is a major employer, including agricultural workers, food processing, and retail workers. Food projects are also vehicles to build community and give oppressed groups a chance to self-organise. There have been a number of food and land projects initiated by people of colour, and women are very visible in the alternative food-growing movement.

Workers are also eaters and as employers and government begin to clawback the money they have put into the pandemic through real-wage cuts, worsening of conditions, fire and rehire, and austerity and cuts to social projects, workers are left worse off and less able to afford the rising cost of food. This might indeed motivate more people to get involved in community food growing as well as to demand more money to pay for the food from supermarkets.

Resources

https://www.globalagriculture.org/report-topics/meat-and animal-feed.html
https://veganorganic.net/2019/05/85-of-land-needed-to produce-uk-food-supply-used-for-animal-products/
https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content uploads/2021/01/A-Vision-For-Positive-Trade.pd

For more information see:

https://britishmeatindustry.org - industry/imports-exports
https://inews.co.uk/news/environment/how-the-uk-could-become self-sufficient-in-fruit-and-veg-294060
https://foodfoundation.org.uk/covid_19/monitoring-imports-of-fruit-and-veg-into-the-uk/).
https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/ uploads/2021/01/A-Vision-For-Positive-Trade.pdf

Organisations and Resources:

More resources can be found in websites listed here.
People's Land Policy: www.peopleslandpolicy.org
Land Workers Alliance: https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/
Rootz into Growing: https://landinournames.community projects/rootz-into-food-growing
Sustain: https://www.sustainweb.org/

Growing and Food Initiatives

Glasgow Food Growing Network: https://glasgowfood.net/about-us
Granville Community Kitchen (London): https:// granvillecommunitykitchen.wordpress.com/
Organic Lea (London): https://www.organiclea.org.uk/
Sow the City (Manchester): https://www.sowthecity.org/

Birming-gum 2 Lesta ‘Hottest Day of the Year’ 13.22 17/6/22 –

Amy Grandvoinet

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you are you are you are you are

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In a field
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sizzle go their petalz
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drip drips
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under sun-
HATS.

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c The grass is rusty. c
u u
o Minds are tired & soar, o
worrying,

Your hands hurt.
h Your hands hurt. h
c The water glistens and c
u ice-pops in your scratchy u
o back garden, bright blue. o

h Spin spin, h
c purple velour sofa. c
u p p u
o l ‘The world’s burning up’. l o
e Plz, somebody: water. e
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Evening reck-nings, SHP 2007 –

Amy Grandvoinet

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ferris wheal.
When we got downstairs
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We're moving things that don't exist anymore, there's no one waiting for any of this. They've decomposed. All these things someone used to hold or build a room around. They're gone.

A Rubbish Story

Jade Grogan

It's 5am in the portacabin. The shift starts early before the cars start to pull up, lining the side road behind the back of the retail park that leads to the tip. Most of the stores in the town have permanently closed, but the tip is booming come 9am.

Cars edge slowly up to this tip that's more like a pit, but you wouldn't guess at the depths of it till you come face to face with the rectangular open windows that throw open one side of the building. It's an old warehouse factory, where wasted objects have overtaken the people. The building sinks beneath the ground when you look down. It's like seeing the doors of a lift open with nothing inside, just the drop. Three different windows mark the space between owned and discarded, these wide, open spaces, several metres across and up, invite a car boot's array of differently sized objects, from a Tamagotchi to whole mite-bitten wardrobes.

'That kettle's on its last legs,' Josh says. He isn't used to work kettles, this is his first job. Fresh out of school for an apprenticeship in rubbish. The kitchens in the town were all full up, that would have been his first choice. Instead, he got the tip, waste and refuse, all packaging no filling. Bones no meat. Choice.

'It does the job still kidder, don't worry about it,' Daz, his teacher, puts back to him.

Josh shakes his head, and grimaces as he takes the last swig from his tea, 'More limescale in that cup of tea than my nan's old bath.'

Daz chuckled as he put his foiled-up sandwich into the fridge for later and moved his worn-out body across the small floor space towards the door. The weight has fallen off him in the last six months. Can't make head nor tail of it, same walk along the

seafront once a week, same canned BIG SOUP for dinners, the occasional chippy. But there is a noticeable fading, a loosening of the jeans, the feeling of bones pushing out.

'Ok,' he says, opening the door to let in a peel of sky the colour of wotsits, 'Let's get a move on. The kettle can wait.'

Walking out into the orange glow across the uneven gravel floor, Josh kids himself that it's only them around. Daz was done kidding a long time ago. He knows how the desert hides its hills, the car park, its attendants, the tip, its creatures. This is his last year. Thirty years he's worked in refuse.

Bin stock.

It's their job to sort the bits that get left after the biggest objects are removed for incineration. The bits that don't neatly fall into one of the three window-object categories but get chucked down anyway, by a chancer, a rum'un. You know those crumbs you push into the skirting board thinking they're someone else's problem, even if that someone is you next Tuesday.

Argos catalogues, pages matted with the melted plastic of biros. Linoleum. So much linoleum. Ash trays with faded Manx cats in them. Docked. A Bell's whisky jar with some coppers in it. Ellesse trainers under a fold-out table, with the leg underneath, twisted. Those little aliens you'd get in jelly, a perfectly formed baby in a cup, wanting to be held, like you, now. A Monopoly board, torn around thick aquamarine-blue rope you'd tow a car with. Black bin-bags upon black bin-bags, wrapped around numerous objects, creating new objects out of their scattered formations. Patterned bits of carpet, sofa chairs with cheap fringing, next to an old gas heater. As if a living room was trying to make itself out of the mess.

To get to the bottom and do the sifting, Daz and Josh open one of

the windows and take the cherry-picker all the way down, which means climbing over the window into the pit, trusting there'll be something solid to stand on when their legs dangle to the other side.

Daz presses the button once they're in, using a thick thumb of pressure all the way down. Josh has started imagining he's cutting through water every time they descend, at first as a joke, then as a breathing exercise, it helps with the jelly-like feeling which would come through his legs when the picker started moving. A tank of oxygen on his back, skin slick against the material of his wetsuit, submerged but dry. He'd rather be floating down or up, held in liquid, he reasoned. Being on dry land is heavy.

Once they get halfway down, the stench, it hits, the kind you can't clean away. It's especially bad this morning, as if no air had come through the building at all. People above, might call it rot, the ones who know how to hide decay. But at the bottom, the dust doesn't settle, it hangs, Daz and Josh breathe it in, and it glitters in their embrace, a toxic reciprocity. Masks help, but they can only do so much when you're wading through other people's shit.

'Let's open one of these windows before the timer, just to let a bit of air in.'

'Ok, sure. We just need to make sure we close them before people start arriving.'

'Know the rules better than me now, eh.'

Daz barely looks back at him and goes to the button, caked in dust, to release one set of shutters.

Unloading the tools for the early morning clear up, Josh takes a few steps like he's on the seabed, getting used to the way his feet sink

into the sand – deeper on some steps and not others. He thinks Daz clocks him, so he quickly re-adjusts, lets the tank go, settles into the hard ground, and starts walking around the objects, like he's going in and out of cones.

'It's important to do this, ok. It's called *the scrip.*' Daz told Josh on his first day. 'You take in everything on the floor, or as much as you can, by tracing the different objects between your steps before you even think about touching anything. It usually takes about 30 minutes to cover the floor properly.'

This is the first week Daz has started letting Josh do the scrip himself. It gives him some time to think about people's personal items, which have since become things or not even recognisable as things. He wonders what meaning there might be in the object remains they find on the floor, feeling for the point at which the teddy just becomes tissue.

'You know it makes me think. It's sad really. Looking at all this.'

'Makes you think what?'

'Er, I don't know.' Josh hesitates, biting his bottom lip with his front teeth before he bends down to pick something up, 'That nothing comes from nothing … '.

Daz exhales, *Christ, they always give me a talker*, he thinks to himself.

'Go on.'

'We're moving things that don't exist anymore, there's no one waiting for any of this. They've decomposed. All these things someone used to hold or build a room around. They're gone. The energy's disappeared, what am I even holding, my hands are empty.'

Looking at the bits of rubbish in Josh's hands, Daz is puzzled. 'Well, maybe I should get a new kettle after all. That limescale might have got into your bloodstream. No one builds a room around an Argos catalogue, cocker.'

'I did! It was my favourite book when I was growing up. Every year, a new catalogue, another world of colour and plastic,' he says, smiling to himself.

'Your favourite book? You're meant to say *War and Peace*, something by, I don't know … one of them types.'

'Oh, the royal one? Keep your high-class histories and shimmering ceilings. I could dream in Argos.'

'Well Josh, you've come to the right place. You'll need to apply your imagination to observation here.'

'I'll think of it as an upside-down Argos.'

'Whatever you say. People will be arriving soon, so we best get everything cleared now. The shutters all open whether we're in here or not, and these tippers aren't looking to give us any money. I've already told you about daydreaming in the morning.'

Josh felt Daz's uncharacteristically stern tone sharp against his skin and decided to stay quiet for a while. *It had to be an upside-down Argos*, otherwise he'd never get through it. He couldn't be doing this for less than minimum wage, there had to be another way to look at it. It'd help his mum out, call it extra for the house. He couldn't move out yet, anyway. To where, with what? He didn't want his mum to be on her own either; she'd already lost too much.

No, that type of leaving would just mean looking back. But Daz, he couldn't understand. With his jeans that didn't fit him, from the

uneven attempts at humour to 'Don't speak another word to me today'. He'd stayed here thirty years without many obligations, it seemed. Maybe he'd been somewhere else – it couldn't just be himself thinking about another life. Despite the niggling feeling of hope scratching at his eyeballs, he'd catch himself in the morning, looking at the rusty screws in the mirror and the grimy tiles surrounding it.

What makes you think you're any better than this? No-mark nothing. You can't magic yourself somewhere else.

A few streets across, Leila was sorting her own rubbish, making the call on the throwing and the keeping. She was about to go into the same year group as Josh's younger brother, Rolo. They'd never spoken, apart from the time Rolo told her that she wasn't as ugly as some of the other girls in their year during a mixed PE lesson. That was a sort of bond.

Her extensive collection of teddies – big bears and Tys next to Ikea one-off toys – had steadily been overtaken by growing piles of books in the last few years, the only books in the house. She preferred Kafka to Austen and the growing copies of modern European classics confirmed her seriousness. Today would progress the march toward that seriousness. It would mark a break from the synthetic fluffiness of childhood, or at least she hoped it would.

'I hope those bags are ready, Leila! We'll be waiting for hours if we don't leave now,' her mum called up.

Leila had a last-minute change of heart about how childish the mottled and multi-coloured bear with boots on was before taking it out of the bag. She'd keep it, just as a reminder, she thought.

'They were ready ages ago, mum!'

'Right, put the bags at the top of the stairs. Your brother will bring them down when he's out the bathroom.'

It's not as if I can't do it, she thought. But fine. If anyone should fall and break their neck, it wouldn't be her.

This would be their first trip out on the weekend in a while. It's a trip, the tip. Something to do here. An event in the calendar, a clear out, a day out. A tip as in the edge of something, a point but not the top, more of a below, a cavernous dump which is nonetheless finite. A free-falling object finds its base in the end, however far down – the crash, bang, smack into something else.

Leila came down the stairs carefully, watching each step as if she might stumble on any one of the patterned fabric rectangles.

'The door's open, get in the car. I'll be out in a second.'

Leila got into the car, and put the keys in the ignition so she could have the radio on. She moved the dial to click into each station, reaching her mum's favourite, Smooth FM, Charles & Eddie's 'Would I Lie To You' blasted out, she decided to leave it on despite pretending to never like it.

The boot opened for the bin-bags, before slamming shut and shaking the whole car. Leila's mum, Sara, was also throwing out some old things. Things she wanted to move on from. The chest of drawers she used to share with Ray, Leila's dad, was no longer a hold for their life together, it was just a container, half-empty, a reminder of a relationship she could only reach through the halo of memory. It could go today because people don't just pour their objects into the tip; they pour themselves into it. It's like throwing off a weight, that moment, where the weight of the object threatens to take you with it. Just before you pull back from the wide expanse, your arms reach down and out gathering dust in

the morning light, almost not letting go but catching yourself just before it takes you. You gasp,

before stumbling back, surprised at the willingness to feel the air beneath your feet. 'Think of Leila.' *Leila*, a conjuring word worth stumbling back for.

When they finally got to the retail park, there were already more cars than Sara expected this early. The most popular place in town, a free service for dissolving memories into objects and matter. She veered straight past the other cars and the 'No tipping before 9am' sign to pull into the first open window for large, heavy objects. Leila slipped out of the car to look through the open middle window, peering right down, hooking her chin over the edge to see

Below

Josh had finished doing the scrip and was sitting down on a single chair in the corner of the warehouse floor. Never more than one person on a break. He was watching Daz quite intently, thinking about all the things he didn't know about him. It seemed odd that he was still pacing the floor up and down against the wall. He looked so thin as he slipped his hand around the waist of his jeans, and leant over by the wall appearing to trace a pattern in the dirt. It was late, by this time, they'd both normally be making their way back to the portacabin .

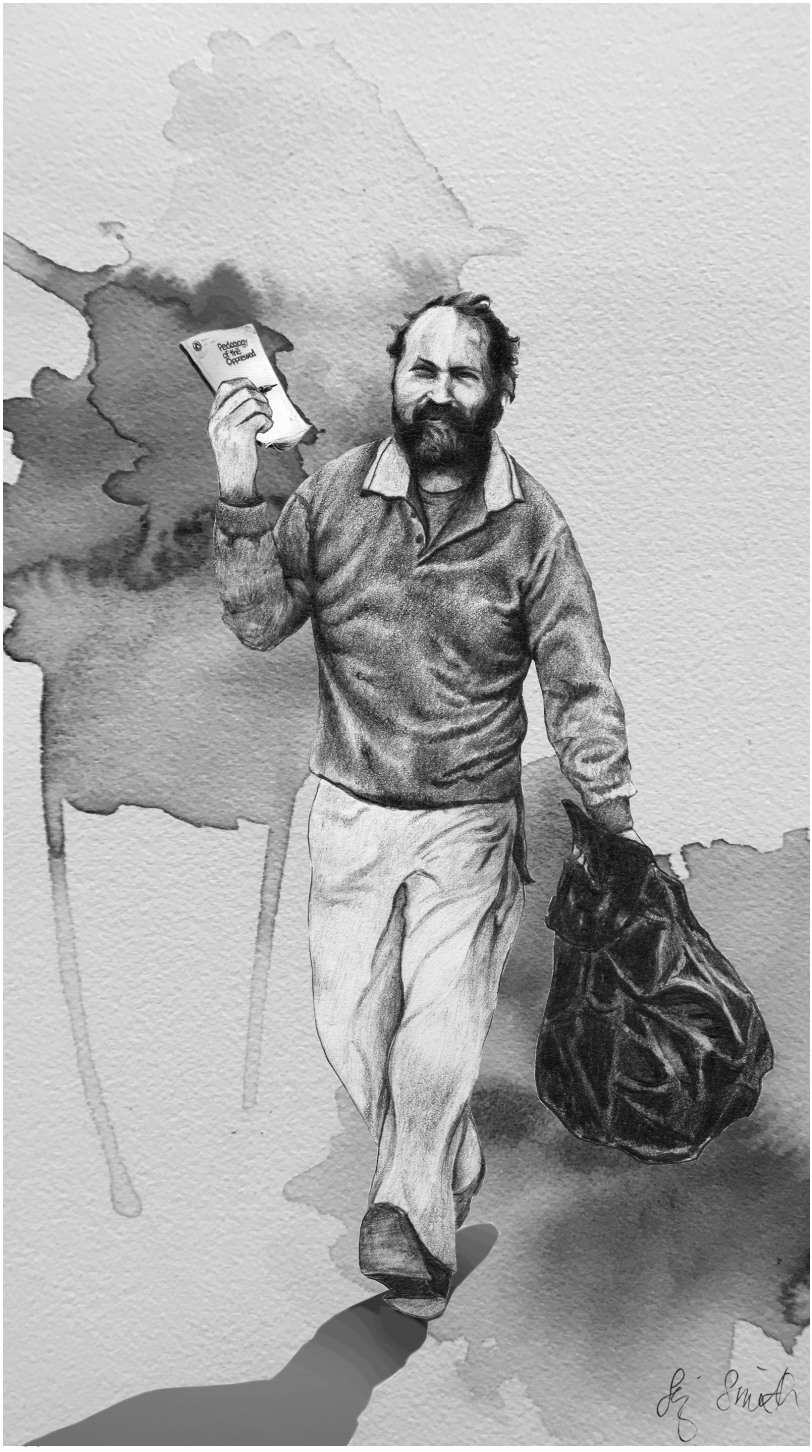
His thoughts drifted as he noticed a little girl looking down at Daz, who'd since stopped pacing. There was something familiar about her. She started to cry in little whimpers. He couldn't hear, but could tell she was getting louder, the whimpers turning into sobs. *What is she doing there, is she real? Am I daydreaming again?* Just a face, hair, and shoulders were visible to him. The crying stopped as she re-focused and a scream like a portal opened from that middle window and the tiny little body. It was mind-numbing, the

sound, Josh's body came up off the chair in the corner as he found the direction of her scream below where Daz was standing, visible just to Leila and himself. His hand came up to his mouth as if to stop something from falling out of it before it was too late. Sara's cabinet came crashing down, the way a lift drops without its wires attached.

Underneath the window, out of Sara's sight, Daz was crushed into the ground like a squashed crisp packet. Before the crying and the crash, Leila's eyes held onto Daz, as he looked up at the sound of her nascent scream before disappearing into the ground. They saw each other reflected back and forward. She thought she could keep him there, with a single look out of time. He reminded her of her grandad, who used to clean the streets her mum grew up on. He was a binman who put his hands into the rubbish, touched it, moved it, bore the weight of it, the way some people carry more than others. On this day she saw him disintegrate in front of her, even though he was already dead.

'Get away, my god! You stupid girl,' Sara shouted, hauling Leila back from the window beside the one she thew the cabinet over. She fell back with Leila before comprehending what had been wasted below. There were more screams before a stillness settled on the scene. Sara's hands felt too empty as she gripped Leia's little arms on the floor, unable to move, she wanted the weight back. Being above was weightless, too weightless.

After the death, Josh left the tip and the scrip behind. He was told he had no other options, still, he never went back after that day. Every time he went past a tip, he'd make a sign of the cross, like his mum did whenever their car drove past the graveyard her parents were buried in. *In the name of the father*, remember the dead amongst the rubbish, lost but still living


Prisoners
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Cyprinoid

Doing the Bins

Declan Geraghty

The things you see doing the bins, things that would disgust, offend, or even intrigue the average person. I see things I sometimes can't get me own head around. Things that baffle me, strange things left to the elements, dumped. Things that seem to carry sentimental value, things that carry energy from previous owners. If energy is what you could call it – I sure as hell can't put a word to it – all I know is that I know it's there. Some days you find things, new things, things that work. But you eventually end up binning them, because of the energy they give off. Because of whatever it is they project, whatever it is they hold from past holders. And me Ma always said to me: You're special Connor, you're special but you don't know it yet. All these years later I think I know now.

I had that thing, you know, like an empath, maybe even something more than that. Like an extra sense, a gift you could call it. You could feel things from people even when they didn't physically touch you. You could get it sitting near somebody on the bus, and it was OK but sometimes you'd have to get off. Some people's energy you craved, like a drug. Some people's energy was so beautiful that you'd make any excuse just to be around them, until you got too needy and eventually they drifted away, like all the other different types of energy.

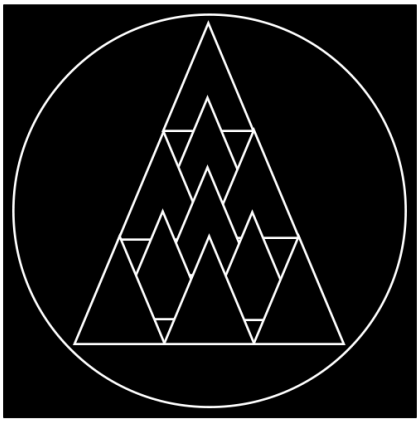
Like flavours, mild, alluring, soft, non-existent, dangerous, evil, weighty, brutish. It wasn't until I started doing the bins that I knew I had the gift. No, I always knew in a way but doing the bins kind of confirmed it, like it brought it up, bubbling out of my subconscious self. It brought up something in me that I put behind me years ago. I remember getting violently ill around Craig Smith in school. So ill I convulsed on the floor, and the class laughed loud as they looked on thinking I was messing, and Mr Carthy bringing the boot down on me thinking the same: Get up ya young pup ya. And we'd all hunch our shoulders in fear like we were expecting a snowstorm, and I'd look at that huge Victorian blackboard, the one that gave that nasty clicking energy. And Niamh peed herself; she always did that. Craig Smith would eventually grow up and murder his wife and kids.

You always know, but you never express it with words, because words can't express certain things. Words are just words, I suppose, words are not the same as feeling something nobody else feels but you. So you don't bother ever telling anyone, because they wouldn't understand anyway, even if you knew the words. You realise words are not a sense, so you don't bother explaining the extra sense you have, it's just there and it probably doesn't have to be explained anyway. Last week I went home early: somebody put their dead cat in the bin. The energy that came from the cat, it stuck with me for days, it's still on me, all over me, just not as bad as the first days. Me ma used to bring things home from jumble sales, secondhand old things, some were good, some things shined green, that nasty energy. And me wife shines green these days, she doesn't know I know what she does when I'm not around.

And the colours she makes when she lies; I even see colours when she talks about washing the dog. And when she talks about her ex-husband the colours mostly disappear. When she's stressed the colours intermingle, and when she's happy the colours turn to colours they don't have words for. Thirteen years with that woman,

and if she could give it all back to me she wouldn't – she was that type. Seeing her colours didn't help though; most people don't see what their partners are really like, but I can't avoid it.

The blokes who do the bins think I'm an oddball, but I don't mind. They're all decent men for the most part, with decent colours, except the Latvian bloke, who's colours go haywire when he looks at his phone. And his colours go crazy when sees that I know he is what he is. Because I think he can see colours too. His face grins when he sees mine, I don't know what he grins about, maybe mine are pink. But I can't see me own, not me own colours, just other peoples.



From the Land Comes Desire

Adam Cogan

Adam CoganNeoliberal ideology haunts almost every corner of British society. Over decades it has worked tirelessly to convince us that we are inherently selfish, competitive individuals – and has alienated us from each other in the process. Under neoliberalism, the concept of freedom is reconstituted as the ability to own private property and to not have anyone else interfere with what you choose to do with it (within the confines of the law). People inevitably become separated from each other, but also physically from the land – both are now reduced to a privatised form and, in this form, land is emptied of value and meaning, reduced to an asset to be guarded. Healthier ways of relating to each other and the spaces we live in have been exchanged for cold market logic, emphasising growth, 'efficiency', profit maximisation, and cost–benefit calculations. Land has ceased to be the site of community, the basis for life. Decades of neoliberal hegemony have thus erased the memory of different ways of relating to the land for the majority of us.

However, everyday people do not just passively absorb the neoliberal consensus. Jeremy Gilbert argues that 'neoliberal hegemony is dependent on constant work to make sure that popular media stay on-message with a culture of competitive individualism and political apathy ... on deliberate social engineering to make

sure that working class communities do not re-discover their own capacities.' The ultimate ploy of neoliberal ideology, he believes, is to '[affect] us negatively in order to make us feel less able to act in the world, less able to think creatively or dynamically'. All this, combined with the capitalist ethos of maximising profit with little genuine concern for social and ecological 'externalities', results in devastating effects on both the working class and the natural world.

Yet, neoliberalism has inevitably generated its own response to the ecological crisis: a response which characteristically obscures its social aspect and emphasises the role of the individual, both as consumer and property owner, a response which is also ignorant of issues of class, and as such, is incapable of stirring up any real desire for engagement among much of the working class. If there is to be any hope of overcoming the social and ecological crises which face us, we must reject neoliberal thinking in favour of an ecological politics of desire which centres land and community – built from the bottom up. And the significance of desire is central. As Jared Margulies asks: 'what worlds do we miss in failing to speak of desire?'

Neoliberalism and a 'Green and Pleasant Land'

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. The BBC reports that we are 'in the bottom ten percent globally for biodiversity'. In pretty much every measure, the UK fares poorly: pollinators are in rapid decline, nearly thirty percent of British birds are at risk of extinction, sewage litters our waterways, industrialised farming has led to the reduction of flying insect populations by sixty percent over the last two decades, flower rich meadows have plummeted from covering thirty percent of the UK a century ago to less than one percent today, and only two percent of the UK remains home to ancient woodlands. In response, government funding for wildlife and nature has been slashed by forty-nine

percent in real terms since 2008–2009. And the Conservative leadership has pledged to bin the Habitats Regulations, which Greenpeace notes is 'one of the most fundamental protections we have to safeguard nature and wildlife in England'. Of course, the ailing state of Britain's land and wildlife has not escaped notice. But the unique character of neoliberal ideology, firmly implanted in the national psyche, has produced its own response to ecological issues, obligingly disseminated – consciously or not – by those bourgeois sections of society who profit most from it. Its primary manifestation is known as 'lifestyle environmentalism', a notion that foists responsibility for eco-crisis on each of us as individuals (most notoriously in the form of 'carbon footprints') and urges us to find a solution by exercising our privatised power as consumers. A solution which incidentally suits the capitalist class perfectly.

Mainstream attitudes to environmentalism often view people and planet as fundamentally in opposition, maintaining that the only way to conserve nature is to clear it of any human presence and bring it back to a supposed Edenic 'unspoiled' state. Claudia Geib notes how the myth of pristine wilderness runs counter to scientific fact, recent studies showing that human activity is not always damaging to nature and can benefit conservation. This attitude is a product of the historic and present class structure found in conservation circles and in the wider environmental movement – a movement that is criticised for being overly white and middle class, and that has been strongly influenced by a bourgeois liberal tradition which, at least since Thomas Malthus, has been either explicitly or implicitly antagonistic to the majority working population, as well as being racist.

Since neoliberalism's rise to hegemony, narratives surrounding ecological issues have become ever more infested with bourgeois, neo-Malthusian, capitalist logic (perhaps the most egregious example being E. O. Wilson's Half Earth Project, where fifty percent of earth would be cleared of human presence – how this would

be achieved is frightening to contemplate). This logic formulates 'nature' as something 'over there', something in bounded confines that we must protect, maybe visit occasionally to enjoy, but otherwise keep off and not interfere with. We can help Nature be safe by buying and doing (or not doing) certain things, but we (as overly reproductive, destructive humans) are ultimately the problem so we should feel bad: absolve your sins with a Patagonia fleece and groceries from Whole Foods (owned by Amazon) – but don't you dare pursue real systemic change through direct action or otherwise. In effect, the 'solution' is couched in typically individualistic and consumerist terminology, and of course often comes with a subtle duplicitous dose (remember, these are 'polite' bourgeois professionals here) of racism and anti-working-class antagonism when those less affluent cannot, or do not wish to, partake in this consumer bonanza ('f only *they* would …').

The bourgeois character of environmentalism in the UK is down to the fact that the various channels through which narratives are formed and information is disseminated are dominated by a privileged few. Access to Britain's most influential media channels has always been, and still is, the preserve of the elite. And the messages carried forward are theirs. Why is this so important? Because this lifestyle environmentalist messaging – with its emphasis on personal consumption, individual action, and its moralistic, holier-than-thou tenor – is simply incapable of fostering a sustained desire for engagement among an ailing working class. On the one hand it preaches 'green' consumption, and on the other it asks for yet more sacrifice, more austerity, and launches further attacks on the livelihoods of working people without offering any serious alternatives. As a project it is anti-libidinal, a limp suburbanite vision of a bamboo-toothbrush-future where the poor stay poor through their own delinquency, preferably safely interned in urban squalor, and the well-off live an unconcerned lifestyle where they go for leisurely drives across uninhabited country parks in electric SUVs.

Putting a Working Class Desire at the Heart of Ecological Politics

A 2022 report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation showed that in the UK one in five people are experiencing poverty (about 14.5 million people). This is, unfortunately, not at all surprising given decades of austerity, dramatic upsurges in the cost of living, years of reactionary neoliberal governance, and a pandemic. Taking this into account, it should immediately become clear why the sort of ecological thinking peddled by the privileged denizens in the media is doomed to failure. Barely anyone struggling to choose between heating and eating is going to be stirred to action by the idea of more buying and spending. So, while manifestations of lifestyle environmentalism – whether as direct consumerism or as exhortations to go out into the country to re-engage in nature – may at first appear relatively innocuous, they inevitably find themselves entangled in a much wider and more serious discussion about why environmental action in the UK is largely failing. And, at the heart of this discussion, is the question of desire.

Desire as a fully theorised concept has a fairly long history, harking back at least to the Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza. For now, it is enough to speak of desire as a propelling force – it is what urges us into motion. For Spinoza, desire drives us to seek out joyous affects (pleasure, delight, joy) and avoid sad affects (pain, sorrow, displeasure). Joyous affects are those that increase our ability to act in the world. In contrast, when we are consumed by sad affects, we are less able to act in the world – this is when we have become influenced by external forces that govern our actions. These forces could stem from people (like a toxic partner), things (like craving junk foods), or even systems and ideologies (like neoliberal capitalism). Under the influence of these forces, Spinoza maintains, we are no longer free, rather we become prisoners to self-destructive impulses. A key takeaway here is that joyous affects increase one's ability to act in the world (to have greater

freedom and agency). John Protevi talks of joyous affect as an '[enhanced] capacity for productive relationships with others'. And Jeremy Gilbert defines freedom and agency, very much counter to the privatised, consumer-oriented character of their neoliberal versions, 'as things which can only be exercised relationally, in the spaces between bodies, as modes of interaction'. By now an outline of desire's role as a social and political force is beginning to emerge. However, a final key point to note is the influence of external forces (passions) in limiting our ability to act in the world. This is very relevant to how neoliberal capitalism captures and commodifies desire.

Both Mark Fisher and Jeremy Gilbert have written extensively about the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism and neoliberalism. As Fisher notes, while workers had desires for something beyond long monotonous hours on the assembly line, too many on the left (in the words of Sarah Jaffe) 'sung (and still sing) paeans to the factory floor'. The Thatcherites were quicker off the mark and 'seized the moment to paint their reorganisation of the economy as liberation'. This shift, explains Gilbert, entailed a 'move away from a highly regulated, conformist, collectivist, form of social life' that offered a certain level of accountability to the needs of the governed, moving towards 'a system which tolerates far higher levels of diversity and personal freedom, so long as that freedom is expressed primarily through private consumption and as long as its expression does not take the form of substantial public claims'.

The consumer imperative which defines the neoliberal concept of freedom is a prime example of Spinoza's passions. At no time in history has the human psyche been more bombarded by an endless stream of external stimuli, always seeking to tempt us to grind more of ourselves into the machinery of Capital. The result is the opposite of joyous affect – there is no increase in our ability to act in the world or to create productive relationships with others. Rather, we are ever more enslaved to those external forces. Desire, or what

passes for it, has been hollowed out to such an extent that now it pretty much operates along behaviourist lines: seek quick bursts of pleasure and avoid sources of pain as much as one can under the circumstances. As we already know, competition, individualism, and what Alex Williams calls 'negative solidarity' have become deeply entrenched. Any projects geared towards the resurgence of positive, reciprocal relationships with our environment will always struggle to succeed under such conditions. This is precisely why the kind of ecological messaging cooked up in the neoliberal tradition is so ineffective. Lifestyle environmentalism is essentially making a plea to that metabolised capitalist simulation of desire which seeks to momentarily assuage our guilt and complicity, but which can never address the root causes. It is an ephemeral form that only appeals, if it even truly appeals to anyone, to those with enough resources to try and pursue it.

What we need, rather, is to unearth a post-capitalist desire which speaks to a long-suffering working class, a project that together we can build and bring forth. A politics, as Mark Fisher argued, that focuses 'on what capital must always obstruct: the collective capacity to produce, care, and enjoy'. A politics evoking a world which could be free – a world which, notes Sarah Jaffe, 'must be built from those desires that break us out of our rituals, our habits, our melancholic attachment to socialisms past and our need to always be scrolling through our smartphones'. Such a politics must, of course, also be ecological. It is no longer enough (it never was) to harp on about the wonders of the natural world or new green products without addressing wider social and economic issues, nor is it enough to merely sprinkle some 'diversity' here and there in the hope that that will bring some change (neoliberalism's solution for almost every social problem). It is necessary to collectively begin formulating and disseminating visions of an ecologically engaged present and future which tap into a broader desire for change. For that to happen, ecological thinking cannot be delinked from social struggles. A working-class desire must be at the heart of a post-capitalist ecological politics. But where to begin?

Unearthing a Post-Capitalist Desire

In an insightful article written for the working-class ecology group, Plan C (Bristol) ('For a 'Spoons of the Left'), Dave Brand sets out a vision for what the Left should be doing. He acknowledges that it is at the level of the everyday that neoliberalism gains consent, that 'neoliberalism is the common sense through which we see the world'. As a response, he makes the case that we 'need to build up our own hegemony rooted in people's everyday experiences and articulated with a "socialist common sense".' According to Brand, this means creating 'an infrastructure that can provide shelter and respite from the vagaries of the market and reproduce individuals as "socialists".' This could include unions, social centres, football clubs, 'red gyms', cultural events and, of course, a 'Weatherspoon's of the Left'. All these spaces are, for Brand, 'places where people can go to act politically but also enjoy themselves, places where people are reproduced as socialists, where the primary logic of the space is not competition and accumulation but solidarity and friendship'. Such places are similar to what Jeremy Gilbert calls 'spaces of collective creativity' (to which he would add schools, labs, dancefloors, workshops, and ashrams). Such places would be sites where people can together become empowered through their ability to form those productive, creative relationships that are the essence of joyous affect. Such visions are a good place to start thinking about what the objects of a post-capitalist desire could be. But it is impossible to form a realistic, achievable version of any such project without considering the issue of the land.

According to the Landworkers' Alliance, the UK has one of the highest levels of concentrated land ownership in the world. Guy Shrubsole, a researcher who has spent years investigating the murky world of British land ownership, has discovered that two thirds of English land is owned by just 0.36 percent of the population, most of these people belonging to aristocratic families. Less than 1 percent of the population own over half of all agricultural land. And

about ninety percent of all land in England and Wales is restricted to the public. The enclosure of British land is a deeply historical process that is still ongoing, its primary goal being to turn what was once a common source of life and livelihood into a private source of profit.

At the same time, a report published by Common-Wealth UK explains that the price of land has appreciated sixfold in thirty years, making land (and housing – a large portion of its value being in the land) unaffordable for most people. Meanwhile, urban centres have 'become safe havens for buy-to-let investors and large-scale property developers ... [transforming these] spaces beyond all recognition, stripping them of their character and increasing the cost of living for long-term residents'. Finally, Yali Banton-Heath reminds us that there are an estimated 226,000 properties lying empty in England alone, yet many people are struggling to afford a home. What emerges is a bitter image of how a tiny minority of wealthy landowners and private enterprises profit from the land, while the urban and rural working classes are battered by the ravages of neoliberal capitalism and face ever worsening prospects.

Reclaiming the land stolen from us holds massive potential for providing both the objects of, and basis for, an ecological post-capitalist desire. On an immediately practical level, there is housing access: new forms of land ownership could reduce housing prices and help to release areas for building new affordable homes for the poor. However, it's in agriculture and related sectors where the most far-reaching changes could come. Our current mode of industrial agriculture is well-known to be ecologically devastating. According to researcher Kai Heron, nearly three quarters of UK land is used for agriculture – over half of which is grassland for livestock grazing. Much of this grazing land is low-grade and so farmers have to be incentivised to use it. Only a relatively small fraction of farmland is used for producing food for human consumption, with

the majority of British food coming from increasingly expensive and ecologically damaging overseas imports. The nature of British commercial land ownership is, as already noted, heavily biased towards the wealthy. Professor Simon Lewis' research shows that an outsized portion of UK land is reserved for grouse moor and deer-stalking estates – the latter making up almost a tenth of the UK's *total* landmass. This is a huge portion of land used solely by a tiny minority of rich people. And, of the millions of pounds in agricultural subsidies handed out by the government, the majority goes to the largest and wealthiest landowners. In fact, in 2015 more money went to the top 100 farmers than the bottom 55,119 recipients combined. Farmers who own less than five hectares receive nothing.

Reclaiming this land for the people would bring about massive benefits to all inhabitants of the UK. For smallholder farmers and the rural working class, who face multiple barriers to entering or thriving in agricultural professions, land reform could increase employment and reduce wealth disparities. Simon Lewis notes that 'smaller farmers can be more productive, flexible, environmentally conscious, and are often better connected to those living locally.' A Landworkers' Alliance report (*The Attraction of Agroecology*) found growing interest in agroecological farming practices in the UK, but the challenges posed by the nature of British agriculture means that these projects are unable to thrive and expand, and so remain expensive luxury niches in the market. Land reform and adequate support for rural working class people could therefore provide the material base for those 'spaces of collective creativity': places where communities can come together to form equitable and productive relationships, build livelihoods, grow cheaply and sustainably, and foster less intensive supply chains with surrounding communities, offering locally grown, affordable produce.

Not only that, but new conceptions of land use boast vast potential for rewilding the UK. Rewilding is not a fanciful issue. Ultimately,

the UK cannot sustain itself without its fauna and flora – so much of which guards us against the perils of eco-catastrophe (like floods) and makes food production possible. Common-Wealth UK show that only eleven percent of the UK is occupied by humans, and only five percent is densely populated – leaving vast tracts available for rewilding efforts. Much of the land locked up as grouse moor, deer stalking, or low-grade grazing land could be restored to increase carbon stocks and benefit wildlife. Instead of paying farmers to use low-grade land, some of the £3 billion in subsidies could go towards encouraging and enabling farmers to assist in community-led, participatory rewilding and reforesting efforts. The Common-Wealth *Rewilding UK* report notes that there is potential to thoroughly rewild around a quarter of the UK. This would include working with local farmers to restore under-utilised low-grade land and peatlands, restoring coastal and freshwater areas, expanding the 120,000 hectares of the hedgerows used to enclose private land to form 'habitat highways', and restoring green areas around urban centres. They estimate this would bring tens of millions of Britons back into contact with life-filled land. This not only provides further economic opportunities for rural, working-class people, it also promises well-established health and recreational benefits to the population at large, thereby 'simultaneously tackling the scourges of poverty, inequality, and environmental breakdown'.

Of course, it is important to clarify that this vision of rewilding is not one that sees people and planet as opposed, and therefore premised on more exclusion and enclosure. Instead, it is premised on Robin Wall Kimmerer's idea that 'all flourishing is mutual'. A progressive rewilding can, and must, entail a social and economic transformation which sees all inhabitants of the land as partners in a mutually enhancing relationship. One that brings diverse life back to the land, and brings social, economic, and health benefits to people.

Finally, land reform could directly benefit urban communities by providing the material basis for realising communal luxury. With land and property affordable, cultural and civic spaces, parks, and allotments could proliferate. Affordable homes could become available to all. New forms of managing urban and rural economies (which must inevitably come with land reform), such as Public-Common Partnerships (PCPs) (based on collective control of assets and resources), could foster a democratic ethos – giving yet more power back to communities and, according to Keir Milburn and Bertie Russell, countering the neoliberal entrepreneurial common sense with a 'democratic common sense' by improving 'individual and community capacity for self-governance and democratic practice'. They note that such a model is a self-expansive circuit 'in which the surplus of one PCP helps finance another'. By expanding the potential for democratic self-governance, the material basis for realising an ecological post-capitalist desire based on that 'collective capacity to produce, care, and enjoy' becomes ever more feasible.

There is a wealth of radical potential tied up in Britain's captive lands, and there is nowhere near enough scope here to try and give voice to all of it. Yet narratives surrounding social and ecological issues are dominated by a privileged class who seem unable (or are unwilling) to consider the harsh realities for more disadvantaged members of society, instead offering an unattractive lifestyle environmentalist vision. We must form an alternative narrative that views land not as a series of private places holding 'natural resources', waiting on the whims of private consumer-individuals, but as a common wealth – a source of mutual flourishing for all its inhabitants (human and non-human). Crucial for achieving this is building networks which counter the incessant stream of reactionary mis- and dis-information which comes from the legacy media. In addition, social and ecological issues must always be framed, and dealt with, together – not placed in opposition where one party must inevitably suffer or sacrifice. The problem

of who owns the land, and how they use it, shows how these two seemingly separate issues are completely interconnected. It is here that that propelling force, desire, is key. Those joyous affects that are the object of a post-capitalist desire – and that make us feel more able to act in the world together, to form productive, creative relationships – are buried in the land. Therein lies the material basis for building those spaces where we can counter that neoliberal everyday common sense and foster a new ecological common sense founded on solidarity, collectivity, and joy. It is time for us to bring the land back to working-class people, and to unearth a post-capitalist desire.

It is time for us to bring the land back to working-cla

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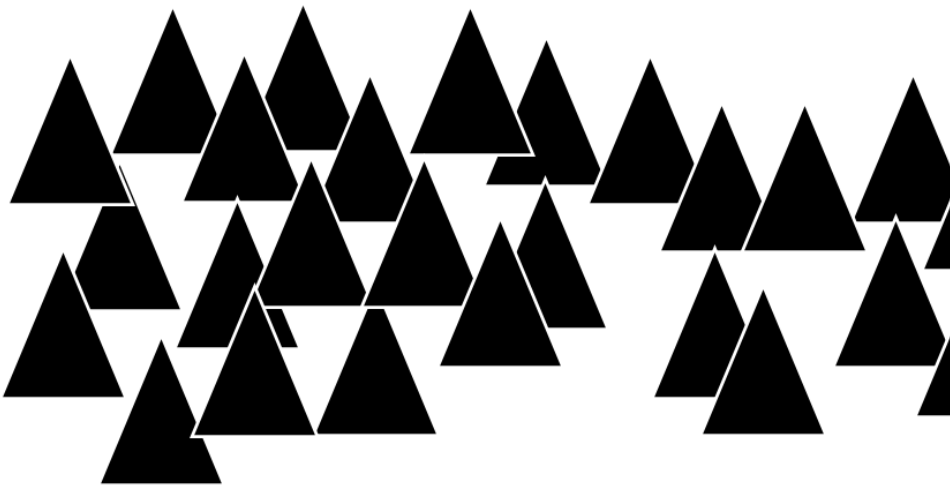

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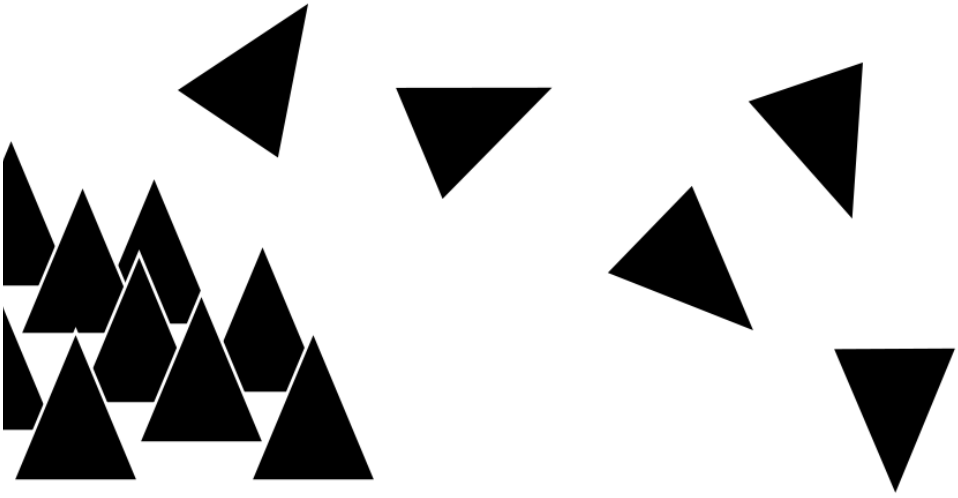

Hi, my name's Jelly and I'm a 2nd generation New Traveller. I wrote this poem in response to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which further criminalises trespass and our way of life as travellers on the road, as I live roadside with my family.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill was passed on the 26th of April by the House of Lords after a series of votes won by the government. The Bill aims to eradicate travelling by forcing those with nowhere else to go into a confrontation with the law. A family seeking a stopping place for the night will now have to contend with the likelihood of their home being seized, their children taken into care, and their livelihoods lost. Criminalising trespass further maginalises vulnerable families and communities, forcing assimilation, and setting a dangerous precedent for sedentary society into the bargain. Amnesty International described the Bill as being "part of a hugely worrying and widespread attack on human rights from across Government which will not only see basic rights reduced across the board, but will also strip people of the means to challenge or contest their treatment."

This Land is Our Land

Jelly

This Land is our land:
I was born on this land and I'll die on this land
when I die I'll become part of this landI am part of this land
so I will park on this land
When you tell me to move, I say we won't be here long,
we're keeping it tidy, I'm used to this now even though I've got nothing to prove.
You say something which basically amounts to:

"Your existence is against the rules"

Then I have to explain to you that the bylaws on your bit of paper
well I simply don't believe in them, yes I will leave but trust me
I'll be back again
Because this Land is our land
and I lived here when I was 4,
I lived here when I was 24,
I'll probably be here when I'm 34
and at least once a year for the rest of my life so I'm sure
you can understand why I don't believe in your bylaws
WhenThis Land is our landI was born on this land and I'll die on this land
when I die I'll become part of this landI am part of this land
so I will park on this land
You called me a "stupid hippy"
probably think I'm “sponging off the state”
well I wouldn't care if I was, but you're an ignorant knob,
don't stick around to find out that I've lived here for years,
I've got a degree and a full time job
You're probably having a bad day,

you've got a bee in your bonnet but
don't take it out on me, you ridiculous wrongun
So I parked up on the common,
in the same place we lived when I was 4,
but now they've put a height barrier in so I can't park there anymoreI went to a party at a quarry in Derbyshire,
my mum said that we had lived there once before,
but we wouldn't get away with that now because our freedom's against the law
ButThis Land is our landI was born on this land and I'll die on this land
when I die I'll become part of this landI am part of this land

Eviction photo, credit to Jelly.

so I will park on this land
So make trespass a criminal offense,
let the landowner shoot those who climb his fencePut the Travellers in jail, fine the walkersand caution wild campers, as living on the land is a crime?
Our human rights are rapidly being decimated.
Where's the world we created?
Well, it's the apocalypse now dearHow did we get here?

WhenThis Land is our landI was born on this land and I'll die on this land
when I die I'll become part of this landI am part of this land
so I will park on this land

Please see the links below for advice and resources for those facing criminalisation with eviction:
www.killthebill.org.uk/about/
www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Police-Act-Full-Guide.pdf
www.gypsy-traveller.org/advice-section/legal-aid/

I choose the road podcast:
https://open.spotify.com/show/3FXyRcqrV3UlWGHpZM61HH

Way Out

Enya Sullivan

I'm looking for an escape; past the small confines of the room I share with my sister. Fabrics soak up the heat, blue tacked posters fill the walls and the TV jumps channels like a skipping rope as we fight over when to switch it off, when to switch it on, and when to turn it down. I roll over as she turns the volume up, the residue of its blue light seeping into my skull as I shut my eyes tight. Resigned, I've started to sneak out into the night.

The front door clicks shut behind me and I let out a sigh of relief- alone. Damp air creeps into the summer evening. A few people loiter by the row of shops across the road- a hairdresser, a One Stop, a Chinese takeaway and a kebab shop. Some of the loiterers lean against a brick wall, which is about seven feet tall. It was once shorter, about three foot, but the council added layers of bricks to stop people from engaging in the 'anti-social behaviour' of sitting. The top layers of brick are a much darker red than the ones below, like a failed ship of Theseus. So now instead of sitting, people tiredly lean against it. People sometimes deal drugs- thanks to the newly created blind spot. Mainly it's just teenagers chatting to their mates, getting away from their parents, begging adults to buy them a litre of Scrumpy Jack.

I sneak past the shops, breezing past a young, bored couple and turn up the hill, crisscrossing rows of brown-brick houses. Weaving through ambient streetlights and pitch-black parks I feel light. In the night, nothing sticks, nothing pushes against me. The tarmac is uneven, covered in gum and litter; shimmering in puddles cradling stagnant pools of oil. The hill is steep. When I get to the top I pause for breath and look back down. I fiddle through my phone's Itunes library, catching my breath, and listen to Burial through gummy headphones. I play the whole of 'Archangel'; the sound-

waves move like a fishbone. It makes me feel like I belong in my solitariness, paradoxically, as if someone is walking alongside me. The sky has a glow to it, smoking embers dance off the tin roofs from the industrial estate. The light is diffuse. Floodlights bleed into starlight. For a second, I imagine I'm in London, looking over the city from an affluent suburb. Back up the hill it's much darker ahead.

Here is St Giles' Hill, a green space that looks over the town, surrounded by private roads dotted with mansions. The mansions are generously spaced along the circumference of the green with varied architecture from the Tudor, Georgian and Victorian periods. There is one mansion that is modern, made completely of glass that is blacked out like a limousine. It's rumoured a football player lives there, but I never see anyone through the windows or by the grounds of these homes.

It's dusk, the best time to walk around: blue outside and yellow inside. People haven't drawn their curtains yet: leftovers sit upon immaculate dining tables, TV screens glow, a man trims his toenails and a woman sips on a glass of wine. The interiors of the houses get more beautiful as I approach the area known as The College, housing the country's oldest public school, just past the cathedral.

Why do I never see people from the estate in this part of town? When The College was set up 600 years ago it was written into its charter that all the pupils would be poor scholars taken from the community. Instead, it is full of boys whose yearly school fees alone are four times the income of the residents of my estate. These boys speak Latin and imagine themselves making laws in Westminster. Over seventy of the buildings are listed- stained glass and vaulted ceilings furnish the infrastructure. The buildings are woven between islands of green and private water meadows. Most of the green space in the town is owned by The College; 250 acres, sealed off by short barbed wire fences.

Although I don't feel at home around this part of town I keep returning; coiling around the streets surrounding The College over and over. I want a slice of it; I'm captivated by the serenity. The shadow of a detached schooling house reflects off the river, standing alone. A cricket murmurs from afar. A fox makes eye contact with me and skits away. The sky is wide open. There is more space here, no brick walls. I inhale the clear air, and exhale loudly. There is a yearning here, it's melancholy. Yet it's better than the frequent shame. Spotted carrying the family weekly shop in the pouring rain, soaked, by a classmate whose family owns a car. No lift offered. Jokes about chavs from the estate. Television shows depicting benefit scroungers, or feuding working-class families subjected to lie-detector tests, psychotherapists and commands to 'get up and work'. Friends' parents refusing to drive through my estate. I bury this as I walk to The College grounds and imagine Ophelia floating in the river.

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Shame comes from the Old Norse *skem*, which means *to cover* or *to hide*. The individual takes shame upon themselves, buckling under the heavy load. Shame is not experienced as a systemic problem or an issue with the world, but the self. There is a burial, and death taking place.

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A friend from school, whose dad works at The College, told me about the route to the meadowy islands. I had often noticed the gap between the barbed fence, furnished by worn clay footsteps that stray off a popular public footpath. The footpath is a long slither of land, gliding through the backbone of The College fields. Walkers can enjoy the river and sights of the willow trees and playing-grounds that are fenced off on either side. The path is frequented by dog walkers, PTA mums or families on weekend walks. They stick to the designated route; hemmed in and absorbed in chatter. They

only stop to tie up a shoelace or to clean up after their dog. A slight deviation from the path sends out shockwaves: old women shout at teenagers who clamber over the fence to retrieve a football, berating them so badly that the ball is abandoned. Security guards are employed by The College to patrol these private pathways. In light of this monitoring, I decide to take my route at night.

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H.G Wells story 'The Door in the Wall' is a story about hunting for passageways. It's narrated by a man called Remond, who recounts a story told to him by his friend, Lionel Wallace. Wallace is *haunted*, he tells Remond, although *this isn't a case of ghosts or apparitions- but I am haunted. I am haunted by something- that rather takes the light out of things, that fills me with longings…*

Wallace is six when the haunting begins. As he walks to school, unaccompanied, he encounters a white wall, with fallen Horse Chestnut leaves guarding a green door. He is mesmerised, filled with an *intense desire* to go through the door. And yet he also feels scared that walking through the door would be *wrong,* or perhaps *unwise*. Wallace starts to stall: walking past the wall with his hands in his pockets. He walks up along *the mean and dirty shops,* arriving at the front of a plumber's and decorators. He pretends to window shop, looking at dusty pipes and earthenware, while *passionately desiring the green door*. He zigzags along the street.

***

I zigzag through the bustle of The College when I make my first night excursion to the islands, walking past drunken pockets of people like a ghost. There is a roll of laughter from the pub to the left of me, an old coaching inn from the 1700s. It is adorned with chandeliers, boar heads and a piano. I think about the taxidermy, the rifles on the walls and the men inside.. I wonder if they feel rooted in the

world, contained in these old walls. It makes me uneasy. A friend told me about a ghost who haunts the top of the pub, which is also a bed and breakfast, pulling off guests' bedsheets in the night. Her silhouette is gaunt; she starved to death on a winter night after being turned away from the inn.

The drunken squabbles from the pub fade out as if submerged underwater. The glow of a lone, orange street light guides me through a narrow alleyway. I'm back to the public footpath from the other day, which is now empty. I switch on my phone's torch and tread the path carefully, looking out for nettles and rabbit holes. The hole in the fence looks strangely bigger in the darkness, the dull wires brush against my legs as I pull myself through, hands landing on the grass. A private playing field stretches ahead. It's huge, two acres, all to myself. I'm not sure what direction to take. It seems vast. Overwhelmed, I lie on the floor and make snow angels that muddy the immaculate green. The weight of my entire body supported by the ground. The moon, crescent, winks in the clear, star-scattered sky.

Eventually I make my way to an enclosure. It opens up: off-centre sits a tree, its body bending like a throne that beckons to be clambered on. Burls of wood dig into my thighs. As I twist and twist I notice a small stone building behind some trees and bushes and jump down to investigate. It looks like a small chapel. There is a single window with broken stained-glass. I stall, before being pulled in by the gleaming glow of the glass. It leads me through the empty door frame like a will-o'the-wisp. Torch out again, I step through and look up, my arms over my head in case anything falls. A chandelier dangles above me, it has electric light bulbs that faintly flicker. Ahead of me is a small stage, four by four metres. It's lined with dusty chapel pews. The walls are covered in framed posters of school masters- the wood rotting at the joints.

I feel like I've entered a frozen part of time; the stillness is as clear

as an alarm. I look back up at the chandelier. The ceiling is slightly vaulted. I shout at the top of my lungs, unsure of what has come over me. The sound reverberates all around, making me freeze and the chandelier shake. Silence follows, filling the touch-starved crevices, making time slow down. Am I about to get caught? The silence seems to be closing in, dread filling my heart. I start running, scared that the walls will collapse. I keep running and running until I'm out of breath, pausing at the edge of the playing field. Amazed, I start to smile; spinning myself around, giggling and full of adrenaline. As I leave, giddy, I spot another hole in a different fence. It seems to be out of sight from the dog walkers so I decide to take my next journey in the daylight.

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Wallaces stares at the shop front some more when he is suddenly *overcome with a gust of emotion.* He runs through the green door, letting it close behind him. Through the door, it is *somehow like coming home.* Wallace has entered a *paradise*, with overgrown plants belonging to an enchanted garden. There are two panthers, which he gently strokes with ease. The garden is vast, with hills far in the background. Here he feels a sense of lightness: *there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous.*

Suddenly, Wallace is flung back out into the grey streets of West Kensington. He is distraught, *a wretched little figure,* crying at the sight of the *harsh reality* around him*.* The dirty shops, speeding cars, rude workers barging past. The harshness of his world is compounded when he tries to tell his father and aunt about the door. They punish him for telling lies: beat him for being *too imaginative* and take away all his fairytale books. In shame, he tries to forget about the door, to ignore the lure of his imagination. He studies hard at school, keeping his head down.

***

This time it's daylight. I glide down the stairs, nearly knocking my mum's oil pastels off the wall. I imagine myself as a runaway orphan or travelling *Flâneuse*. There are lots of obstacles in the daylight. I skate past the shops, nearly running into the long brick wall. A group of teens a few years older than me take up the pavement as they nod to reggae vibrating out of an open, parked car. A family stop to chat to their neighbour, discussing one small boy's football game. I notice dog shit on my shoe. I huff and puff behind an old woman with a zimmer frame, worried that the chapel might disappear.

Once I'm out of the estate I avoid the town centre and the packed footpath with the dog walkers. I run up main roads where the council offices and car mechanics sit. A council worker stands in a glass corridor, scoping out the air-ducts and panels on the roof for a way out. An old mechanic scolds his apprentice: *Not there! Were you born an idiot?* People sit in the Job Centre waiting room, fiddling thumbs with their heads down. I veer off and loop through another affluent suburb of detached houses.

***

As I seek new paths, Wallace tries to stick to familiar ones. And yet he cannot escape the door. It appears to him throughout his life like a ghost, causing him to pause as he tries to go about his business. These matters of business and of everyday life, pull Wallace away from his desire to pass through the threshold. He traipses between mundanity, obligation and doubt. He sees the door on his way to school again, but cannot be late, cannot break his record for punctuality. And he sees it again, on his way for an interview for his scholarship at Oxford and ignores it. He doesn't want to do anything that could jeopardise his scholarship or place. He thinks of his *fine career ahead.* And again, Wallace rushes to parliament

(now a politician) to vote on a new bill. He encounters the door *livid in the moonlight* but doesn't pass through. He sees the door one final time while walking along with a colleague who he is keen to impress, worried about his *delicate* place in government. As he walks with his colleague, he sees the door in his field of vision, their shadows folding over it as they amble by.

***

I've been spending most of the summer at the chapel: sneaking out, ignoring friends in the town centre and lying to security guards. The tree branches that shelter the chapel appear more twisted as summer folds in: sparser with less leaves. The town dwindles too, fewer people on the footpath and fewer tourists at the Cathedral. I find the change of seasons comforting; I'd be back at college, applying for universities and reading more. I find it to be a liminal zone-both bored of childhood and cut off from adulthood. But a zone that makes me look forward, dreaming of being elsewhere. I feel bolstered by the chapel: a place I can think in, run around and shout in without judgement or consequence. I can mispronounce all the words in the books, I can smoke without being caught. I can be with myself: no longer an onlooker of those sitting bored against the wall of the estate.

But as it gets colder I feel less at ease in the chapel, things feel off. My route has got convoluted, narrowing in. Some of the boys have returned early for extra tuition. I keep on encountering teachers and guards who frown at me when I claim my dad works here, unfamiliar with that name. I'm paranoid they'll catch me out soon.

I take my usual route to the chapel, powering through a blustery wind, looking forward to the respite of my shelter. The smell of weed wafts my way, mixed with boyish chuckles. The sounds and smells are coming from the chapel. I linger tentatively at the doorway. There are a group of boys in fresh blazers they haven't

grown into yet. I'm unsure of what to do or say. They splay their limbs across the pews, as if waiting for their shoes to get polished. One scrawny boy fumbles with a grinder while the other two, puppy faced, tentatively watch. They're talking over one another, insecurely, about technique. I want to leave but I'm transfixed, they seem so at home here.

The boys jump when they notice my shy silhouette, as if they have seen a ghost. One scrawny boy drops his grinder, the crumbs falling onto his blazer. Another tells me to fuck off. He's angry, though there is something comical about the way he says it in his posh accent, as if his mouth is full of butter. I smirk. His face then changes; he is really angry. I run away, faster than I did the first time I visited a month ago. I run through the playing fields, interrupting a game of cricket where more shouts follow. I'm not sure where I'm heading and turn off a worn desire path. For a fleeting second, I feel assured and guided, knowing that other people have walked this track to defy the public footpath. I run through wilting wheat, dodging piles of cow pat and hop over a kissing gate. It leads to the nature reserve and another hill where teenagers have parties and barbecues.

Muffled dance music is playing at the top of the hill. I run towards it, elated with a last glimmer of hope. My heart sinks as I get closer. It's mellow, fading out. The speakers sadly play to the remaining ravers. It looks like they've been up for days. They huddle within an enclave like zombies. One guy jerks his head awkwardly, desperately trying to sustain energy, unable to accept that the moment has gone. There is a general melancholy as people hover. I see their brows burrow as they try to figure out what to do next. A face will light up and then deflate, like the piles of squashed bottles and cans around them, the thought gone. I see two girls staring towards me; their whispers catch the wind as another one joins in to gossip.

Amber, who lives down the road from me, emerges from the trio. She looks haggard, her eyes are still wide. I haven't seen her this whole summer. I look at her friends, standing one step behind her. They seem older than us, I don't think I've met them before. They're wearing crop tops that reveal goosebumps. She stumbles towards me. *It's YOU!* There is a pause as she looks me up and down. I feel out of place, like a renegade. *Fuck, you look awful! Where have you been?* I can't think of what to say, it feels silly now. *Nowhere really.* She shrugs and turns back, linking arms with the other two girls. For the first time in my wandering I feel lost…or like I have lost something.

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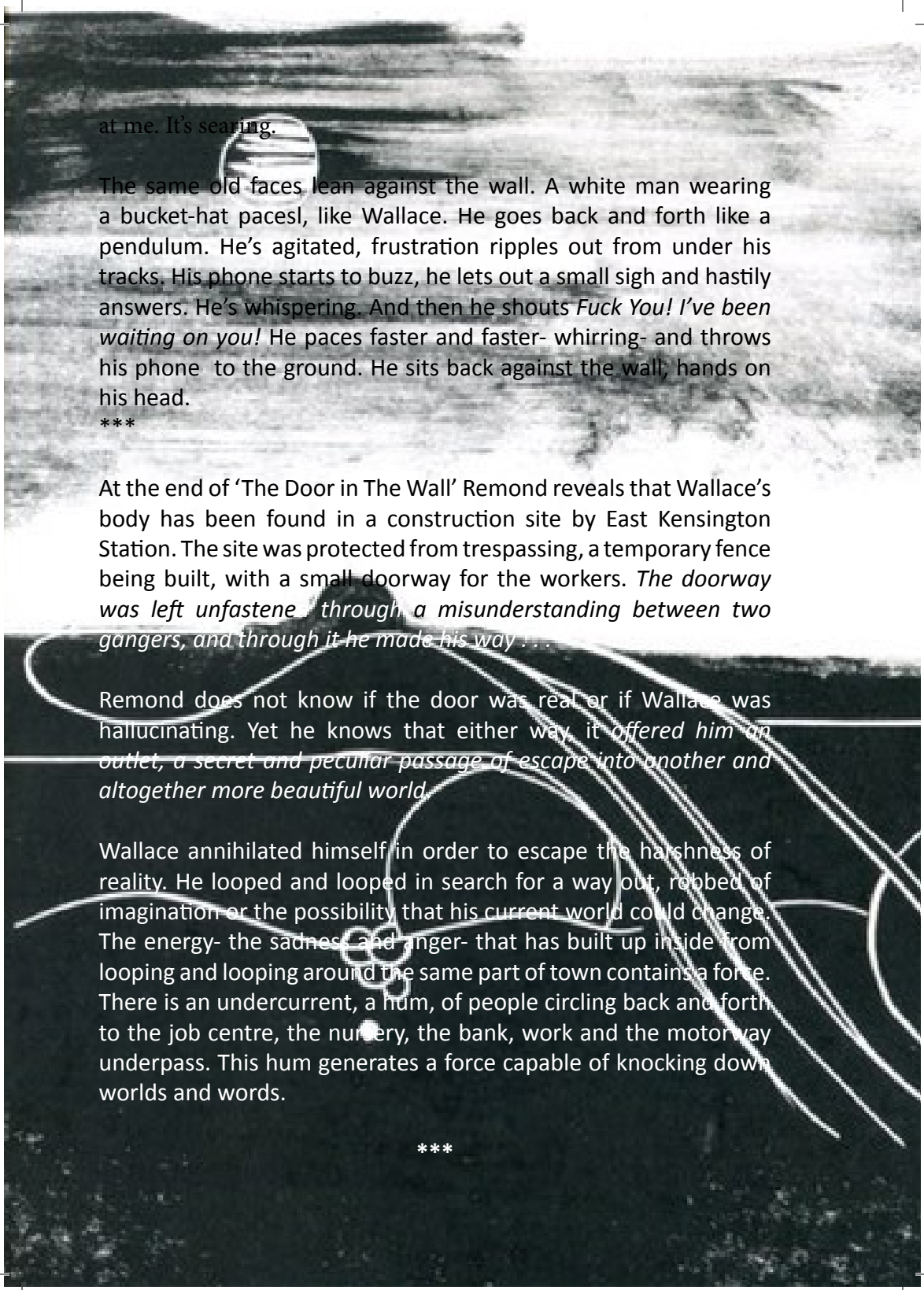
Freud says that melancholia arises from something lost. The lost thing is *both loved and hated by the sufferer*. They feel both love and hate because they do not understand what it is they have lost and so they hopelessly *struggle to keep a grip* on it. There is confusion and yearning. This melancholy is intangible, taking place in the unconscious mind.

Freud also says that melancholia impoverishes and attacks the ego: blame and hate falls on the sufferer because they cannot comprehend what they have lost. This is what distinguishes it from mourning. Mourning is conscious; the sufferer knows what is missing and gone from the world. In mourning, the world becomes impoverished rather than the self.

***

I drag myself towards the estate- head hanging low. I catch my reflection in a shop window, I do look awful, like a ghost. My head and heart pound as I look myself up and down, structinsing every angle. Dirt is powdered at the bottom of my trousers. The bell for the shop door pings, a rabble of strangers pour out, I feel them staring



at me. It's searing.

The same old faces lean against the wall. A white man wearing a bucket-hat pacesl, like Wallace. He goes back and forth like a pendulum. He's agitated, frustration ripples out from under his tracks. His phone starts to buzz, he lets out a small sigh and hastily answers. He's whispering. And then he shouts *Fuck You! I've been waiting on you!* He paces faster and faster- whirring- and throws his phone to the ground. He sits back against the wall, hands on his head.

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At the end of 'The Door in The Wall' Remond reveals that Wallace's body has been found in a construction site by East Kensington Station. The site was protected from trespassing, a temporary fence being built, with a small doorway for the workers. *The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way . . .*

Remond does not know if the door was real or if Wallace was hallucinating. Yet he knows that either way, it *offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world.*

Wallace annihilated himself in order to escape the harshness of reality. He looped and looped in search for a way out, robbed of imagination or the possibility that his current world could change. The energy- the sadness and anger- that has built up inside from looping and looping around the same part of town contains a force. There is an undercurrent, a hum, of people circling back and forth to the job centre, the nursery, the bank, work and the motorway underpass. This hum generates a force capable of knocking down worlds and words.

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Silver lines from the man's smashed phone's motherboard glimmer. I catch my reflection again in a convex security mirror. My gaze initially fixates again at the dirt on my trousers and my tired face. I sigh and take a step back, looking at my entire body. It is there, full of feeling. I squeeze my arms and shake my legs. In the background of my reflection stands the wall. The older brick at the bottom of the wall is worn. I wonder if it will collapse. I wonder if I will miss the wall and think that, maybe, we are required to mourn this world so that we can make something new.

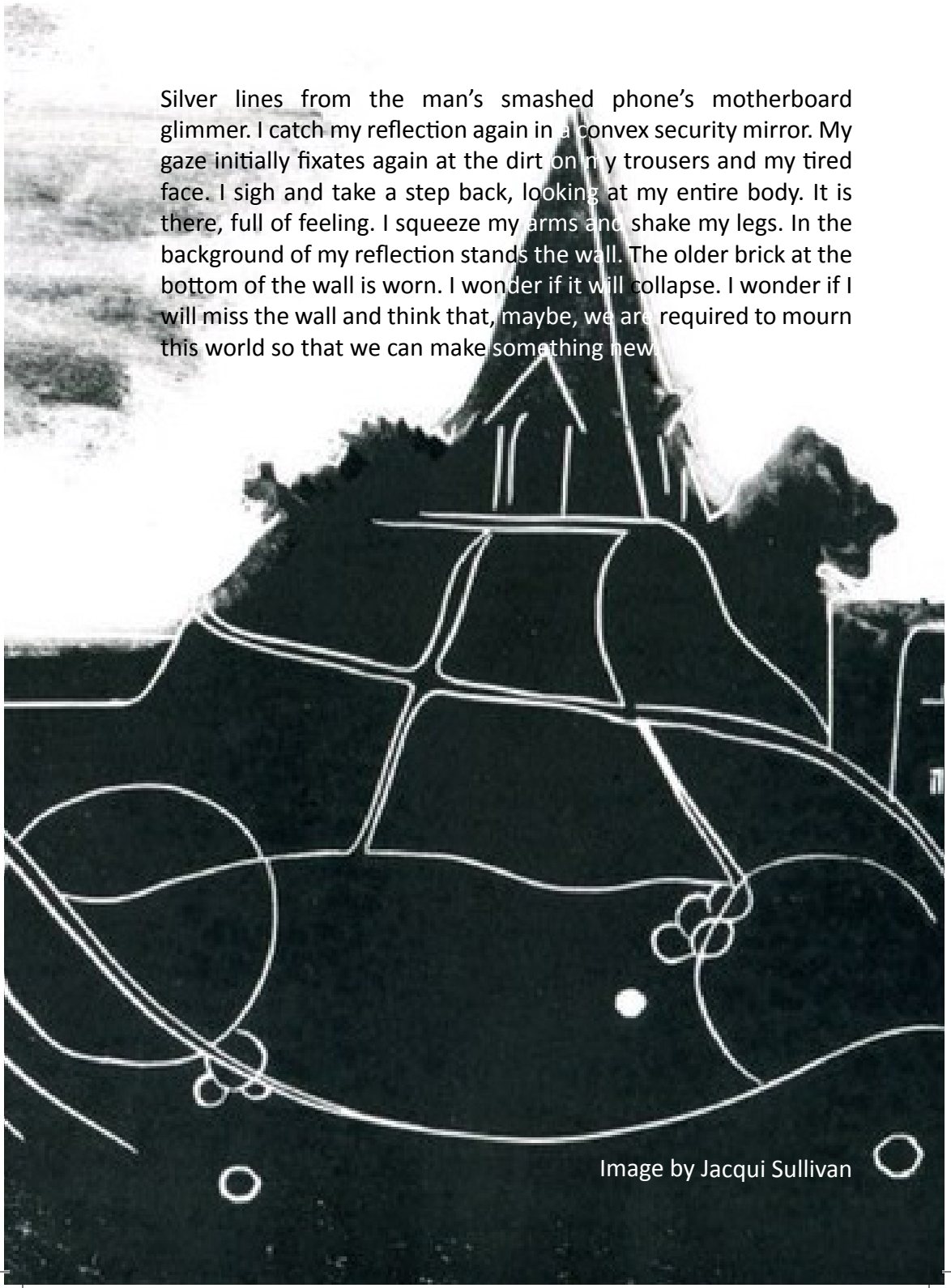


Image by Jacqui Sullivan

Surplus People

Homelessness as a Symptom of Neoliberalism

Olie Martin

it's when you're on the row
that you notice that
everything
is owned
and that there are locks on
everything

Charles Bukowski – 'Trashcan Lives' from *The Pleasures of the Damned*

When living rough, you rarely manage to sleep properly. Finding somewhere comfortable to sleep seems impossible. In cities, train or bus stations are often the first place a person goes when they have nowhere to live because they are sheltered and are usually open all night. You can pretend that you're waiting for an early train, and you can try to sleep on the seats. These seats are designed intentionally to be uncomfortable. Sit on any public bench and you will find yourself in discomfort after a while, because these pieces of public architecture are designed to keep you moving, keep you shopping, keep you spending, allowing you to rest for only a short period of time – just enough time to get your strength back and carry on consuming. An ulterior purpose of what is euphemistically called "defensive design"[1] is to ensure that public amenities do not become camping spots for people without a home. Examples of this offensive, defensive design can be found in towns and cities all over the world.

1 See CBC, Canada: 'How 'defensive design' leads to rigid benches, metal spikes, and 'visual violence' in modern cities'

After a few days of staying in a train or bus station, staff may start to notice you and become aware that you are using the station for shelter. When I was street homeless in Manchester, it got so bad in the city centre that they would generally leave people alone as long as they weren't causing trouble. Staff could become hostile and ask you to leave. With hurt pride, and not wanting to be seen living in a train or bus station, you move on. Some charities will give you a sleeping bag, or a tent. Some will not, thinking that it encourages people to stay on the streets. With nowhere to go, you will likely end up with a sleeping bag, searching the city for the safest, quietest place you can find. In my case, I ended up sharing a doorway to a bank with four other people, thinking that there is safety in numbers. One had lost his wife to cancer and, following a mental breakdown, his home. One was a heroin addict and prostitute who asked if she could stay with us for safety. One was a woman with severe mental health problems, who was also a racist - and this caused us problems. The fourth, an older gentleman, seemed relatively stable, but nonetheless vulnerable.

Eventually, a charity found us a place in a shelter. You wouldn't know that this place even existed and there seemed to be no regulatory body above the church that ran it. A big part of the church's modus operandi was to find religious converts. The shelter had a strict regime which included being woken up – often quite rudely - at 5am every morning – and being back by 9pm. In the evenings, we were invited to listen to the pastor play religious songs, read from the Bible, or watch a Christian music video.

From here, with the help of the charity that had found me the spot in the shelter, I got a room in a shared house. I thrived, until the landlord decided to sell up. This is how I had ended up on the streets in the first place. Once again with the support of the charity, I was given an emergency place in a "supported living " accommodation, in which you had your own flat. By this time, I was working – in a decent administrative job – and a key worker that I

was close to expressed concern that this place wasn't right for me, but I was just happy to have a roof over my head, and more than happy to have my own flat. My key worker friend was right. Most of the tenants had severe and "complex needs"[2]. Many tenants were in the grip of addiction, most commonly to heroin and/or alcohol. Drug dealers preyed on the place. There was bullying from at least one staff member, and between the tenants. People ended up trapped there. The longest "sentence" I heard of was four years, throughout which time the tenant was supposed to be moved into a flat of his own. I joined the eighty-thousand others on Greater Manchester's social housing waiting list[3], hoping that my number would come up. In this twisted game of housing bingo, I had been awarded extra points for my volunteering work, which moved me slightly up the list. Twice it looked like I had won, and I was given a new address, only to be told that the house was needed for others – so-called 'decant'[4] families in need of an emergency place to stay. I fully recognised the need of these families, with children, as greater than my own.

In 2010, the UK's coalition Government initiated its fiscal policy of 'austerity', which by 2019 had seen more than £30 billion in spending reductions to welfare payments, housing subsidies and social services. Since 2010, there has been a 52% rise in the amount of people sleeping on the streets of Britain[5]. Austerity, which several commentators including the UN Rapporteur on extreme poverty, Philip Aston, conclude is an "ideological project causing

2 See Public Health England Evidence Review (2018) Adults with Complex Needs (with a focus on street begging and street sleeping)

3 BBC News (2020): https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-55208787

4 Decant is the process of sourcing temporary or permanent emergency accommodation for tenants. See One Manchester's decant policy as a working example.

5 House of Commons (2021) 'Rough Sleeping' Briefing Paper: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn02007/

pain and misery"[6], has been linked to nearly 120,000 extra deaths in England in the period 2010 to 2017[7]. Related housing policies, including an immediate 60% cut in 2010 to capital investment in social housing[8], successive housing benefit caps and freezes, 2013's 'bedroom tax', a steep decline in building social housing[9] and the advent of "affordable housing", for which rents can be up to 80% market rate, have all contributed to significant increases across all forms of homelessness since 2010[10].

Homelessness is not as simple as not having a home. Each individual will likely have a unique combination of "complex needs"[11] to be addressed, which might include mental and/or physical ill-health, addiction issues, financial issues, trauma and emotional scarring. Solving homelessness is not as simple as getting people off the streets. In 2020, Shelter reported 253,000 people in England as living in temporary accommodation, a rise of 115,000 since 2010[12]. Figures drawn from government figures by independent Manchester news source '*The Meteor*' show that on 31 March 2010, there were 273 households living in temporary accommodation in Manchester. In 2021 that figure had risen to 2,537, a staggering 829% increase[13].

6 The Independent (2019): https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/un-poverty-austerity-uk-universal-credit-report-philip-alston-a8924576.html

7 Watkins, J et al (2017) Effects of health and social care spending constraints on mortality in England: a time trend analysis, BMJ Vol 7 Issue 11

8 The Guardian (2015) https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2015/mar/11/housing-crisis-time-austerity

9 From 40,000 in 2009/10 to less than 1,000 in 2015/16. See Mulligan, G (2016), Time to end housing sector austerity, Mulbury

10Shelter (2018) - 'In Work, but out of a Home'

11 See Crisis: https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/rough-sleeping/rough-sleepers-and-complex-needs/

12 https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/homeless_in_a_pandemic_253000_people_are_trapped_in_temporary_accommodation_

13 Manchester Meteor (2022): https://themeteor.org/2022/01/15/temporary-accommodation-gm/

Neither is it as simple as getting people houses. Limited regulation in the private rental sector has seen housing commodified and maximised for profit, with property developers paying scant regard to Section 106[14] obligations (through which a percentage of new build is reserved for social housing or an equivalent community investment) and a marked rise in people occupying rooms in houses of multiple occupancy[15] – if they are lucky – or a cupboard underneath the stairs, if not (true story). Left unregulated, private landlords can raise rent, disregard the needs of their tenants, leave tenants living in squalor and, as has happened to me twice, arbitrarily decide to sell the property.

This lack of regulation applies across the board in our economy and sits at the heart of the post-Keynesian, neoliberal agenda. In Britain, the Beveridge report of 1942 influenced the post-war introduction of the Welfare State from 1948 onward, a comprehensive system of support which included the National Health Service, substantially increased state pensions and, importantly, rent controls. In 1979, the Thatcher administration rejected the post-war consensus and implemented a suite of neoliberal reforms, key features of which included deindustrialisation, privatisation, market deregulation and the dismantling of the welfare state. Thatcherite policies including the 'Right to Buy' sale of council housing and large-scale closures across key industries such as coal mining, steel, and shipbuilding resulted in mass unemployment and shattered communities. Fulfilling the grand vision of the Chicago School, the neoliberal project was advanced throughout the 1980s by Thatcher in the UK, Reagan in the US and upheld as an "economic miracle" [16]

14 Manchester Meteor (2021): https://themeteor.org/2018/02/21/endemic-avoidance-of-payments-to-councils-by-property-developers-revealed-while-affordable-housing-is-sacrificed-for-profit/

15 The UK Government reports 470,000 houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) in England and Wales, in 2018. Source: HMOs and Residential Property Licencing Guidance, UK Gov

16 See Petras, J & Vieux,S (1990), The Chilean Economic Miracle: An Empirical Critique, Sage

in Chile, under Pinochet's brutal dictatorship[17].

A principal feature of neoliberalism is a deregulated economic model which creates, consequently, "surplus people"[18]. Simply put, these people are surplus to the requirements of the prevailing socioeconomic order. Currently, the economic status-quo is focused on maximisation of profit. Free markets run freely, until they collapse, requiring emergency state intervention. Meanwhile, if an individual cannot contribute towards economic growth, they become surplus to the system. It stands to reason that hyper-development and privatisation of land, property and amenities creates marginalisation, displacement and atomization. Cessation of private tenancies tops the list of the causes of homelessness[19]. People that we see on our streets have become surplus people. A system in which the market reigns supreme, and in which profit is the primary motive, is incapable of meeting society's complex needs. The system is not fit for purpose. I was a surplus person. Change is essential.

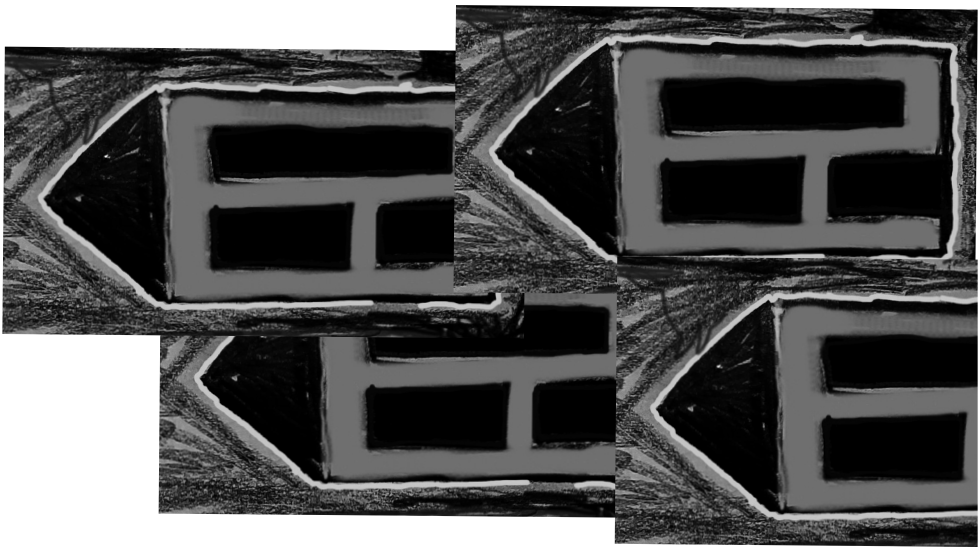
We are capable of building a society in which nobody is surplus to requirement. Not only that but, within this society, everybody can be given a chance to contribute and to thrive. In my case, I was lucky to escape that trap. None of this comes down to any kind of innate talent or skill but, rather, being educated about how the system works and how to navigate through it, in order

17 A more fitting "economic miracle" might be the example of East Germany, where a comprehensive welfare and social housing programme and a post-reunification housing market where supply outstrips demand (insulating it against the 'housing bubble' and the 2008 economic crash) has resulted in an economy which now outperforms many parts of the North of England. See www.britannica.com/place/Germany/The-East-German-system and Centre for Cities (2021) What can German Reunification teach the UK about Levelling Up

18 In the Marxian tradition. Marx explored the notion of 'surplus populations' as part of the theory of the Reserve Army of Labour. See https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12314258/

19 Revisiting Beveridge (2020), Frank Field & Andrew Forsey, Politiea.

to find myself a place in society after essentially being written off. Ironically, this took the kind of "pulling up by the bootstraps" that the Tories like to talk about but not in the way that they mean - this was about survival. Not only should everybody be properly educated about the system and its own failures but, ideally, people should not have to be exposed to these failures. It is perfectly possible to build a society in which these failures eventually become nothing but a source of historical embarrassment.



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Deleted most social media but can be contacted via Twitter @ Olie_Martin and check out my website: www.oliemartin.com

Big up Lumpen!

We kept Our Poverty in our Hair and Our Woodland Boots On

Lou Howell

We kept our poverty in our hair. It was always tangled, down to my waist; huge clumps of frayed knots felt the brush's punishments on a school morning before my tongue had felt the breakfast in the cereal bowl. I never wanted to brush it. My morning rituals unfolded as I would wait for my sister to walk with me and slowly let the radiator burn the back of my knees, gathering the smell of smoke on my trousers and scorching my knees pink. I joke now that we keep the poverty in our English teeth too. Wonky, yellow, distained. But what I really know is that poverty is felt so much deeper in my body in many different ways. I experienced sexual abuse and emotional neglect thoughout my childhood. I found myself disconnected from the world for a number of reasons on a daily basis. To put it simply, my brain felt at war.

Growing up as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and neglect can be extremely alienating. As a child, I often positioned myself as the other. I felt a lot that I had to make myself small and many others around me considered me ‘shy’. I had friends, enjoyed school, being with animals, and creating stories in my head. I didn’t mind

being quiet, but I also made my suffering quiet. I didn't tell anyone around me what I was experiencing and lived in chronic shame. I often wonder what paths of survival I sketched out in my childhood self to get the version of me I am today, how many times I had to let myself turn to dust and reshape in the form of a human – though it felt impossible to be alive in the act of embodying, with so much violence entrenched in my environment. What I return to, again and again, is nature. The stretch of green space at the back of our flat felt sacred to me. We lived in a pale green block of flats with a stretch of woods cocooning our estate. These woodlands served as a transitional attachment as I moved between the liminal spaces of puberty and finding myself. I would hop over logs; hold leaves up to the light and bear witness to their veins; watch squirrels climbing barks and birds nestle in tree branches. I would sink my feet so far into the mud as I was convinced I could feel the earth's pulse. I was a poor, traumatised kid, quiet to the world. But what I also became more importantly was a forest protector and a nature dweller. The woodlands allowed me to feel a sense of home, playfulness, and joy, and to form a human/earth connection. I felt an alliance to the land for making me feel safe – a feeling I was not afforded much in my home.

Nature allows for us to feel rooted in our bodies and connected to our surroundings with present moment awareness. Like the way nature controls and powers our ecosystems, we too can transform powerful and traumatic emotions with nervous-system awareness, allowing them to become productive and unstuck. Trauma emotions stick in our body, and becoming unstuck from these emotions means coming into a present, grounding into the now. Healing, like anything else ecologically-minded, is something that's never fixed in place or in time: it is always changing and in flux. As are the seasons that guide us through growth, regeneration, and decay. Nature is resilient despite humans fragmenting ecology, as are the bodies we occupy, even after experiencing the complexities of trauma.

As we move forward into a better world, access to nature and migration is everything. A friend recently talked to me about the importance of movement in creatures' lives, and with urban areas becoming more in community control, how we must tear down constructed borders between humans and non-humans. We can dissolve the idea that poor people don't deserve to have or be in nature. We must see ourselves as not separate to what lives in our streets: the weeds that live in cracked pavements; woodlands stretching behind tower blocks in a race to see who is taller; the noise of the rain on the kitchen window; berries in bramble bushes ready for us to forage, to indulge in their sweetness; wild garlic patches on roadsides. No gods, no masters – only the wild world itself, arms outstretched, asking us to bathe in its comforts. I have felt hostage to the pain and suffering that poverty has caused to my communities and to my body, but I know I also have a choice in responding to pain. So now I walk with my muddy boots on, hand in hand with my inner child, and I still never, ever, brush my hair.

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